



THE
KNIGHTLY HEART,
AND
OTHER POEMS.

BY
JAMES F. COLMAN.



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M. C.

*Mine is no blossomed bough of Spring,
Thy patient hands are folded here ;
This autumn-wreath I can but bring
And lay it, reverent, on thy bier.*

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INDUCTION.



HESPERUS.

*PLANET OF EVENING! when with banners furled,
Thy kingly comrade goeth to his rest
In the pavilions of the under-world
Beyond the golden threshold of the West;
Thou — nestling deep in Twilight's tender breast —
Seemest a soul which looks serenely down
From heights no fleshly footing ever pressed,
Upon the shadowy slopes where old Renown
And laurelled Grandeur wear their undisparaged crown.*

*And peacefully, on thy blue eminence,
O, virgin hostage of departed Day!
High-poised above the tumultuousness of sense,
Thou lingerest, last of all Night's fair array:
Till she, despairing of her sceptred sway —
Like the queen-jewel of her kingdom's hoard —
Dissolves thee, in her golden wine, away,
As in the cup imperial Egypt poured
When to her dusky arms she wooed her Roman lord.*

*So dost thou symbolize all constant hearts ;
So do they wait, on Youth's prophetic height,
The dawn of Love ; — and when Love's day departs,
Kindle the kindred heavens with Memory's light.
In broidery of golden stars they write
Remembered Friendship's record overhead ;
And hang, like pearls, upon the robe of Night
The imperishable tears of Genius — shed
From loving poet-lids above the sacred Dead.*

*And thou shalt be my motto for the verse
Wherein — as actors on some village stage —
I would these scattered sentences rehearse
From the great Drama of an earlier age :
And as their renderings of the poet's page
Find, sometimes, favour in less rustic eyes,
These scenes, perchance, may such esteem engage.
So to Hispania's simulated skies
We have rung in the players ; — let the curtain rise.*

CANTO FIRST.

THE KNIGHTLY HEART.

CANTO FIRST.



I.

AMONG the stern vicissitudes of strife,
The story I would tell you is begun.
Nature, melodious once with pastoral life,
Now speaks of homeborn happiness undone ;
And with sad steps the affrighted Seasons shun
The spot where Battle into dust hath pressed
The buds which should have opened to the sun,
And torn their lips from Earth's maternal breast,
Filling her peaceful soul with terror and unrest.

II.

Pale Spring, with tearful eyes of tender blue,
And trembling girlish feet, and clasped hands,
Beareth her stores of variegated hue
To some unvexed, unviolated lands ;
While with flushed cheek indignant Summer stands,
Striving in vain to raise the trodden flower ;
And for her gifts strewn on the thankless sands,
Autumn bewails, in many a fitful shower,
Leaving, with oft-reverted look, her vine-clad bower.

III.

You might have deemed the Argonaut had sown
The dragon's teeth upon that ample field,
And thence a mail-clad human harvest grown,
Whose ripeness must to Death's red sickle yield.
Like glossy foliage shone the knightly shield,
And white plumes danced like the wide-waving grain ;
And where the lark's glad matin-song had filled
The cloudless concave, rose the trumpet's strain,
To whose shrill challenge far-off echoes called again.

IV.

Can we not trace the rival blazonries
Upon each standard wrought by fingers fair,
In tints which mock the sunset's gorgeous dyes,
And flutter rustling in the morning air ?
The Spaniard's banner floats majestic there,
Above yon canvas-city's broad array ;
Yet the loathed Moslem still his empire share,
And silver white, amid the golden day,
Gleams from the taper minaret the crescent's ray.

V.

But now the Saracen must yield, at length,
His last stronghold in that blood-bought domain ;
His nerveless grasp has lost the steadfast strength,
With which he clung to the fair land of Spain ;
Southward across the land-locked sea again
His pilots steer their galleys ; all the hours
Of bygone centuries crowd upon his brain,
With his last look on gray Granada's towers,
And fairy palaces, and many-fountained bowers.

VI.

Long time those circling mountain-tops had seen
The Christian's conflict with the infidel ;
O'er many a gallant knight the grass was green,
And some yet slept where yesterday they fell.
And many a warrior-priest was there as well,
More skilled perchance to wield the sword than pen,
And to count blows than well-worn beads to tell ;—
'T was not by subtle metaphysics then,
Alone, the zealous would convince their fellow-men.

VII.

With camp and church did the court, too, unite
To wreathe War's iron panoply with flowers ;
And often those next day to meet in fight
Passed in joint revelry the evening hours.
And woman left her fair ancestral bowers,
And with soft breath the flame of valour fanned ;
Not fearing even beneath those Moorish towers,
Beside her wounded champion's couch to stand,
And in her own soft palm to press his dying hand.

VIII.

And like the moon amid her train of stars,
Or the tall lily in its stainless pride
Unbent, where War's red step the landscape mars, —
Ready her kingdom's fortunes to abide —
Stood Isabella at Fernando's side.
Hers was that noble nature that can dare
As well as counsel ; — firm, yet gentle-eyed,
Unblenching, where war's reddest lightnings glare,
She stood, to smile on hope, to animate despair.

IX.

For her Castilian spirit could not brook
That there, upon her childhood's sunny land,
With his encroaching step and scornful look,
The unbelieving Saracen should stand ;
And therefore had she roused the loyal band
Who steer by glory as their cynosure,
And in her service they had drawn the brand,
And sworn that they no longer would endure
To see salvation's emblem mocked at by the Moor.

X.

And they had conquered, and with reeking sword,
At length, the stern chivalric vow fulfilled ;
And they had driven that invading horde
From out the lands which they so long had tilled.
In the lone mosque the muezzin's voice was stilled,
Which called Mohammed's followers to prayer :
Henceforth the radiance of the cross should gild
Those domes, and shed its beams of promise there,
In morning's earliest light and twilight's dusky air.

XI.

Now through the swarming camp, the mingled hum,
And martial helms with peaceful garlands crowned,
Told that the day of jubilee had come,
To give again that trampled battle-ground
To its congenial peacefulness. Around,
The joyous hosts, in festival array,
With their glad shouts the ringing trumpet drowned,
And in exulting triumph take their way
To raise upon those towers the badge of Christian sway.

XII.

The stalwart barons, with their feudal trains,
File upon file, in martial order sweep ;
With golden spurs, bright scarfs, and glittering reins,
Unbrokenly their serried ranks they keep.
The chargers' hoofs ring hollowly and deep ;
And snowy foam-flakes, which their harness fleck,
Tell how their fiery natures would o'erleap
Those iron bonds, as, spurning every check,
They toss the floating mane, and arch the glossy neck.

XIII.

All ages mingled there ; — the veteran,
With thin, white locks o'er his scarred temples shed,
Whose winters numbered man's allotted span ;
And he from whose full eye and noble head
The grace of conscious manhood had not fled ;
And he whose helmet's lifted vizor showed
A cheek still tinged with youth's inconstant red ;
While, with lithe limbs that well his steed bestrode,
The long-haired, bright-eyed page beside his master rode.

XIV.

And as that human torrent poured along,
And to the conquered city's gates rolled on,
Amid the stern and dark-browed warrior-throng —
Like wreaths of summer blossoms thrown upon
The darkly rushing tide of Acheron,
Which with the unaccustomed beauty smiles —
Rode many a gentle, blushing Amazon,
Victor of victors, who, with wealth of wiles,
In accent, lip, and eye, the rudest heart beguiles.

XV.

Environed thus by courtly dame and maid,
Whose dark eyes shed a starlike radiance round,
Came Isabel, — the soul of the crusade, —
Her forehead with the regal circlet crowned.
The corselet's woven scales confess each bound
Of her exultant breast ; of darkest green,
Her velvet robe, descending, swept the ground ;
But, more than all such attributes, her mien,
Her look of matron majesty, proclaimed the queen.

XVI.

From each knight's lance the gaudy pennon streamed,
Like tulips by the morning breezes bent ;
Their clinging, sinewy limbs in armour gleamed,
As o'er their steel-clad steeds the gallants leant.
The mischief-making page's merriment
Marked the fair cheeks which at their praises glowed,
And crozier, cuirass, scarf, plume, lances, blent,
To the far gazer's dazzled vision showed,
As if some sparkling stream through that broad valley flowed.

XVII.

And now the foremost of the glittering band
Have reached the city's gates, and entered there ;
The rest in silent expectation stand,
Until the cannon's thunder rends the air,
And trumpets change their warlike tones to prayer.
Behold the silver-shining cross restored
To its undimmed effulgence ; — thousands share
One common impulse ; — sovereign, knight, and lord,
Before the uplifted symbol, bent them and adored.

CANTO SECOND.

CANTO SECOND.



I.

Joy to the conqueror ! — but for him, alas !
Who looked his last on that delicious plain,
And saw the sceptre of his fathers pass
Into another's hand, — his eyeballs strain
In one embracing gaze ; through every vein
The coiling pulses dart with serpent-sting,
And the big tear-drops fall like summer rain ;
Though to the heart such showers no verdure bring, —
The exile's spirit knows no second blossoming.

II.

But who is he that from the mountain-track,
With pilgrim scrip and staff beside him laid,
Upon that gorgeous pageant looketh back
From underneath the cork-tree's massive shade ?
With such a glance might Marius have surveyed
Rome's towering capitol ; Timoleon
Thus in his fratricidal sorrow strayed ;
Or Aristides watched the beam that shone
Where in the lessening distance gleamed the Parthenon.

III.

Manhood sits throned upon his brow, his eye,
Which to his troubled soul gives utterance,
Proclaims him born beneath a southern sky ;
Large, dark, and radiantly bright, its glance
Hath the profoundness of prophetic trance,
And not the warrior's restlessness ; but blind
To knightly panoply, shield, plume, and lance,
Like some lone star in its own beams enshrined,
It burneth with the deep, unflickering fires of mind.

IV.

The bright sun is unheeded, — the fair scene,
The shimmering steel, the clarion sweet and loud,
Are all for him as if they had not been ;
His countenance, convulsed and gloomy-browed,
Hangs o'er the valley like a brooding cloud,
Which from Vesuvius' quenchless crater streams,
Unfurling o'er green earth its murky shroud
Across heaven's blue concavity, — while gleams
Of lightning tell the Titan soul with which it teems.

V.

And why these flashings of deep passion ? Why
Do his big pulses bound in turbid race,
And his clenched, sinewy palms entreat the sky ?
Why should such lowering gloominess deface
That brow, calm contemplation's dwelling-place ?
Why is that manly, patient spirit bowed,
Letting despair and agony erase
Upon that cheek of bronze, before so proud,
The pregnant furrows fertilizing thought had ploughed ?

VI.

He weareth not the Moslem's hated dress ; —
He seeth not, in memory's glass displayed,
Through exile's blinding tears of bitterness,
The shaded fountain where his children played
Left lone and desolate ; — within the glade
No brother fell beneath the Christian's sword ;
No plighted maiden, pallid and afraid,
O'er whom the treasures of his love were poured,
Is ravished from his arms to serve some foreign lord.

VII.

No stranger treads his temples ; — from his hand
No shivered, unavenging weapon fell ; —
Famine and faction with the traitor-band
Surrendered not his leaguered citadel.
His is the greater grief that hears the knell
Of dead hopes, slain by fate and circumstance ;
What have been, have been, and with memory dwell :
But all is gloom, when fadeth as a trance
Imagination's unenjoyed inheritance.

VIII.

A young boy sits beside him, who in his
Has intertwined his hand. His eager eye,
Unmindful of those racking reveries,
Follows the distant pageant merrily :
The cloudless dawns of existence lie
Upon his face, where, scarcely in their birth,
Thoughts glimmer like the restless butterfly ;
And, as a fountain sparkles from the earth,
Bursts bubbling from his breast the melody of mirth.

IX.

Unthoughtful and uncomprehendingly
His vision tracked that triumph o'er the plain,
Restless and dazzled, — when a sudden cry
Escaped his lips, — he turned as if in pain ;
His father's grasp with a convulsive strain
Had tightened upon his. Well might he shrink
From that distorted glance of fierce disdain ;
As, at the fount where he was wont to drink,
Some glistening, red-eyed snake had scared him from the brink.

X.

And his young, round-eyed questionings were bent
Upon his father with a mute appeal ;
And still he strove, with artless blandishment,
To win him from that mood. His loving zeal
Hath half its purpose ; those pale lips unseal ;
His spirit from its slumber half awoke ;
Wild words his haunting fantasies reveal ;
Unconscious of companionship, the yoke
Fell from his soul ; — in stern soliloquy he spoke.

XI.

“O human trust ! on what a broken reed
Do thy fond victims vainly lean for rest !
How dost thou, warmed there, like the viper-breed
Sting into anguish man's deluded breast !
How many sobs of agony repressed,
And tears of blood, are shed upon thy shrine !
How many an imprecation unexpressed
Rings in the empty heart at thee and thine,
While round our barren path thy mocking meteors shine !

XII.

“My cherished, visionary hopes are fled,
Like morning’s soulless, unsubstantial mist ;
Through weary years of poverty they led
Me on, till Youth in lingering farewell kissed
My seaworn cheek, and from her band dismissed,
I entered manhood’s legions : now, alas !
Each crumbling foothold ceaseth to exist ;
And phantom semblances of grandeur pass,
Elusive as the shapes that crowd the wizard’s glass.

XIII.

“In vain my spirit did conceive, — in vain
Did the dark billows round the frozen pole
Utter their salutation, at whose strain
The sleeping embryo stirred within my soul ;
And with a thrill there darted through the whole
Of my rapt being a deep feeling, fraught
With the electric flame Prometheus stole
From the defrauded Godhead. Earth hath naught
Of rapture like the throb that tells the birth of Thought !

XIV.

“And with a spirit-grasp it bore me on,
Month after laggard month of dull delay,
While doubt and caution coldly looked upon
My grand, incomprehensible essay ;
It fed with fire my eye’s undazzled ray,
And calmed the ebb and flow of life’s red tide,
'Mid royalty’s ephemeral array,
And through all perils, like a goddess-bride,
Stood, with sustaining presence, ever by my side.

XV.

“I ’d thought to vindicate the spirit’s claims
To proud preëminence in courts of kings ;
That the calm step which leads to peaceful aims
Might trample into dust all meaner things ;
That, high above the path where venom’d stings
Of creeping passions wound our toiling feet,
Genius might soar on tireless eagle-wings, —
Careless of all the baffling storms that beat, —
To some cloud-cleaving pinnacle, its regal seat.

XVI.

“I met till now undauntedly and bold
The supercilious sneer, the frozen glance ;
My prophet-vision recked not of the cold,
Unsympathizing human countenance.
What were the guerdons of the puny lance,
Their acres, castles, counted all in one,
Titles of proud, heraldic utterance,
To my broad realms white-handed thought hath won,
Beneath the midnight track of the unsleeping sun ?

XVII.

“Hath won ! ah, no ! in vain, alas, in vain
I drag my shackled limbs along the shore,
Bound in necessity’s unyielding chain,
Whose iron eateth to my being’s core !
Vainly did thought, on dovelike wing, explore
The western waste of waters, thence to bring
Its tribute, like the wanderer of yore ;
Ne’er shall I greet those fair shores’ welcoming,
Never my weariness on their green borders fling !

XVIII.

“’Tis not the elements that bar my claim
To that sea-born inheritance. Unswayed
By pomp or power, dear Earth is still the same
For every filial son ;— her waves have made
Themselves my coursers ;— the bright sun, arrayed,
As in barbaric monarch’s panoply,
With glittering golden spoils, and gems inlaid,
Along his westering pathway beckons me
To follow to his throne beyond the barrier sea.

XIX.

“’Tis man who fails me ;— vainly have I sued
To him to aid my mighty enterprise ;
I’ve sunk my nature’s sternness to each mood,
Each tone, to which his fickle heart replies ;
Glory and gain before his greedy eyes
Painted in dazzling hues ; have pierced the veil
That guards the spirit’s holier mysteries,
Trusting through nobler impulse to prevail ;—
But sloth and envy still forbid to hoist the sail.

XX.

“Traitors and unbelieving !— they would reap
Another’s harvest-field ; but still the sea
Doth well her unconfided secret keep,
Or they would have the lion’s share. E’en she,
That paragon of magnanimity, —
Beneath whose matron-sceptre’s gentle sway
I’d stretch a hemisphere’s convexity, —
Urged by their caitiff-counsels, turns away,
Nor grants those unfound realms the giver to obey.

XXI.

“Now hope is dead ; — unheeded and forgot,
My bones must fill a nameless sepulchre ;
No lineage shall deck my burial-spot,
Or wear the crown Columbus could confer.
Would I might lift each spirit-murderer,
As in an eagle’s talons, to the sky,
Point him those lands than Eden lovelier, —
Then dash the tortoise-minded wretch from high,
And in his shivered armour let him quivering lie ! ”

XXII.

He sank upon the ground ; — it was an hour
Of agony that seeketh not relief ;
The goaded spirit bent beneath the power
Of that o’ersweeping tempest of his grief.
But when the ruthless storm hath spent its brief
Ungoverned interval of frenzied rage,
In glittering beauty on the autumn-leaf
Hangs the bright rain-drop, — winds no longer wage
Their warfare, — and soft showers earth’s woes assuage.

XXIII.

’T was thus with him, — he felt that passion sweep
In fury o’er his desolated mind,
And bear away, like the remorseless deep,
The idols in its sanctuary enshrined ;
But, ’mid those ruins, shook and undermined,
His soul looked up to the blue vault, — he cried,
“Lead thou, O God, thy creature, trembling, blind !
He, who hath felt himself to thee allied,
Is still thy servant, — let him in thy strength abide ! ”

XXIV.

How peaceful, through the tempest's rifted walls,
The first blue gleam of heaven meets the sight !
How tenderly the earliest sunbeam falls,
More dear than all its brotherhood of light !
Upon the swift-receding skirts of night
How gently hangs the rainbow's colored ray !
How musical the streamlet's tones unite
With gladdened nature's ringing roundelay,
While the low-scooping clouds in white robes steal away !

XXV.

But clearer than the sky's celestial blue,
That tells of peacefulness beyond the gloom, —
Than the pellucid sunbeam, looking through
The curtained clouds, upon some loved one's tomb, —
Lovelier than new-born Summer's earliest bloom, —
Is the deep calm when tempted man hath prayed ;
When Hope's young smiles his darkened faith illumine ;
When passion's waves by Christ's pale feet are laid,
And his still voice replies, "'Tis I, be not afraid."

XXVI.

And that calm fell upon him, — and on that
There broke a sun of gladness. Lo ! the boy
Hath started from the hillock where he sat,
And cries in accents of familiar joy, —
" See, see, our friend whose aidance shall destroy
Thy moody mournfulness ! " A horseman came
With priceless tidings, free from doubt's alloy, —
" My gracious mistress greets thy honoured name ;
This night, her willing ear will hear thee plead thy claim."

CANTO THIRD.

CANTO THIRD.



I.

THE earth has many altars, — many a spot,
Whence the heart's wanderers no longer roam ;
Where truant thoughts, unheeded or forgot,
Come, like the weary bird at evening, home.
The dim cathedral's consecrated dome, —
The forest, far from human neighborhood, —
The moonlit beach, white with the snowy foam, —
But most, the lonely ruin, giveth food
For silent meditation's melancholy mood.

II.

Not to the heart by sorrow unreclaimed
From the world-worship unto which it bowed ;
Not to the eagle-spirit yet untamed,
Who 'd soar above the snow-peak's glittering shroud :
But to the chastened soul, in whom the proud,
Cold earth hath fettered youth's aspiring wings ;
Whose claims to glory man hath disallowed ;
Decay, to it, a desolate pleasure brings,
Peopled by dead hopes, phantom heroes, crownless kings.

III.

Around the shattered shaft and mouldering plinth
The mantling ivy all-unconscious grows ;
Across the garden's lonely labyrinth
Its shade the mutilated marble throws ;
The banquet-hall, the dungeon-vault, unclosed
Their portals, gay or ghastly, — and between
Grim crevices the tell-tale sunshine flows ;
Or where a world's tumultuous tide hath been,
The mellow moonlight sleepeth, pulseless and serene.

IV.

Such is, but such was not upon that night,
The scene within the Alhambra's palace-bowers ;
Her gilded roofs were redolent of light,
Her halls of gracefulness, her courts of flowers :
The frequent fountain flung its fairy showers
Athwart the perfumed air, with silver sound ;
Music and mirth reëchoed from her towers ;
The very shadows danced along the ground,
And many a graceful laugh spoke the light heart's rebound.

V.

There is a hall within that gorgeous pile,
Where Moslem monarchs held their audience-state ;
High, from the marble-columned peristyle,
Springs the light arch, with carvings complicate, —
Where gilded vine-boughs bear their mimic freight
O'er fretwork of vermilion and cobalt,
Twining around quaint forms their airy weight,
Until the tangled vision is at fault
Amid the intricacies of the soaring vault.

VI.

And there, apart from the molesting crowd,
Begirt by prelates sage and warriors brave,
The chosen few within that court allowed,
Columbus stood, collectedly and grave,
Of unseen wonders, o'er the distant wave
That lay, discoursing to the matron queen,
Whose kindling soul a rapt attention gave :
He spoke, she heard, as they had equals been, —
They were, in kingly thought, in majesty of mien.

VII.

'T is not for me to trace the words of fire
Which from his lips in varying accents flowed ;
Inadequate were pencil, pen, or lyre
To give the soul that through those features glowed,
Unless some prophet painter had bestowed
His genius on the theme. The Sadducee
Had owned the deathlessness that spirit showed :
No caitiff-coward ever prayed as he
For life, — for life ! it was for immortality.

VIII.

And in the ever-varying looks that turned,
And to his sway their chained expression bent,
Appeared the fire which in his bosom burned,
Reflected, as the flaming occident
Is painted on the glassy lake. Intent,
While o'er the heart's roused chords his accents swept,
Discordant souls in modulation blent,
And with an equal pulse the measure kept :
Ambition, avarice, heard ; white-handed pity wept.

IX.

Some listened to the eloquence which told
All the Venetian exile had rehearsed,
Of groves of spices, armies clad in gold ;
Right well in all those legends was he versed ;
And their young-fledged attention still he nursed
With schemes of glory, hopes of boundless sway.
Coldness and doubt his earnestness dispersed ;
It seemed that visibly before them lay
The pearls and waving palms of India and Cathay.

X.

Wouldst build thy temple upon human pride,
Thou 'lt find its corner-stone but insecure ;
No longer than the quicksand's fickle tide
Shall its deceitful steadfastness endure ;
Some nearer, gaudier bait shall still allure
Ambition from his faith ; envy shall part,
Or doubt corrode, the bands we deemed most sure ;—
But wouldst thou mock at violence or art,
Build thou upon that fragile thing, — a woman's heart.

XI.

In that faith found he safety. She had heard,
Unmoved, of orient gems profusely piled ;
No thoughts of fame her gentle pulses stirred ;
Her heart by promised realms was unbeguiled :
But that lands where eternal Eden
Should never kneel to those whom she adored,
The blessed Virgin and her holy child, —
The crystal drops, which from her eyelids poured,
Pledged the souls' light to them whose darkness she deplored.

XII.

He read that omen of his fate aright ;
And as the sun upon heaven's pearly tears
Hangs the refracted glory of his light,
His sunlike soul on those translucent spheres
Formed with its rays a bow, like that which rears
Hope's stairway to the rosy firmament ;
Joy paid him then her long-withheld arrears ;
It was that thrilling hour, so rarely sent,
When two coëqual souls in one great thought are blent.

XIII.

There are no gleams, perchance, to mortals given,
In our deep-yearning, darkly groping state,
Which with more vividness foreshadow heaven,
Than when some noble spirit finds its mate ;
When, through the veil which circumstance or fate
Around our heaven-born impulses hath wove,
Soul speaks to soul, and all we venerate,
In the bright denizens of heaven above,
Stands hand in hand with all that's dear of human love.

XIV.

Not love, the theme of amatory strains,
That storm of mingled tenderness and wrath ;
Unto his mind, its weapons and its chains
Were as the schoolboy's puny sword of lath, —
A rose-leaf trampled in the lion's path ;
But there's a passion purified from sense,
Which in its white, ethereal essence hath
A flame, than such more lasting and intense :
It is a kindred soul's unsexed omnipotence.

XV.

Hath man not need of such? His nature had ;
And at that fount of love and sympathy
He sat him down in strength, serenely glad ;
Her spirit filled his being's vacancy ;
His unslaked lip had found earth's streams to be
Turbid, although they ran o'er sands of gold ;
But this, which flowed for him so pure and free,
Was like a mountain streamlet, clear and cold,
And vast as is the sea round some broad realm unrolled.

XVI.

"This day," he cried, "O queen, hath seen thy power
Give to its ancient faith polluted Spain ;
Throughout the land, from minaret and tower,
The symbol of the Saviour gleams again ;
And shall the infidel in Zion reign ?
Shall the lone garden, where the midnight sod
Shuddered to feel his tear-drops, still remain,
With Calvary's hill, by paynim scoffers trod ?
The Temple be the haunt of enemies of God ?

XVII.

"The golden realms to which I'd lead the way
Shall furnish with their wealth a new crusade ;
And all the lands which own the Christian sway
Be in avenging steel once more arrayed :
The boon for which so many a saint hath prayed,
The prize for which so many a king hath striven,
Glory for which all Europe drew the blade,
Shall to thy consecrated reign be given,
And from those holy courts Mohammed's slaves be driven.

XVIII.

“And those unmeasured lands beyond the sea,
Shall they be left to darkness and despair?
And shall the gospel's sweet tranquillity
Never with beams of promise enter there?
Shall the deluded heathen breathe his prayer
To powerless images of wood and stone?
Shall the soft Sabbath-bell upon the air
Ne'er pour the music of its silver tone;
And through the wood's dim aisles but soulless breezes moan?

XIX.

“Shall man be glad, and never know to whom
His throbbing bosom's thankfulness to speak?
Shall he be sorrowful, and through the gloom
Grove stumblingly, a comforter to seek?
Dry thou the silent tear on woman's cheek;
Let not man's agony unaided call;
Through their accursèd rites, O, let the meek
Accents of pity cry! — shall sin enthrall
One half the world, since Christ hath died for all?

XX.

“Hast thou not seen some mighty torrent leap,
While echoing forests to its groan reply,
Down the abysmal gulf, with ceaseless sweep;
Nor thought each drop a soul, each tone a cry,
Pleading against its sunless destiny?
To fancy's ear such is the voice of them
Who sweep unransomed to eternity;
But every soul thou savest, like a gem,
Shall lend its lustre to thy heavenly diadem.”

XXI.

Words are not eloquence ;— the empty sound
Hath of its finer, fleeting essence naught ;
But all the flashing, tearful glances round
From his roused soul its inspiration caught :
And she was won. At her command they brought
The cross, the loadstar of Spain's chivalry ;
On silken folds by her own fingers wrought :
“ Be mine the enterprise ; this flag shall be,”
She said, “ thy guide to thy immortal destiny.”

XXII.

Kneeling, he took the standard which she gave,
While to his breast its gathered folds he pressed ;
And his glad heart, but now so coldly brave,
Poured its ungoverned pulses through his breast.
’Twas steeled against all dangers which infest
A hero's path, to thwart him or assist ;
But joy was such an unaccustomed guest,
That his cheek quivered, and a blinding mist
Came o'er his sight ;— a tear fell on the hand he kissed.

XXIII.

But mind soon claimed its attributes. Serene,
No trace of short-lived weakness or of tears,
He raised his head, and, with unaltered mien,
Stood like a conqueror among his peers.
“ Lady ! thy smile like the bright sunshine clears
All clouds from off my path ; my ocean-car
Methinks already in its radiance steers ;
Sunlight to joy, — to grief a beacon-star, —
Remembered, cherished, whether fortune make or mar.”

XXIV.

His thanks were brief. He might not trust to speech,
Lest the long pent-up torrent overboil ;
The world had long accustomed him to teach
Silence to wildest thoughts in their turmoil.
For the heart schooled in loneliness and toil,
Few syllables embody many a thought ;
Words are the harvest of affection's soil.
To his prophetic mind the realms he sought
Seemed his, and were to her in grateful tribute brought.

XXV.

There followed words of homage and of grace,
And courtly forms tedious to act or tell.
And now on nature's calmly slumbering face
The star-inwoven veil of midnight fell ;
Through the hushed palaces, the captive's cell,
Upon all life, forgetfulness bestows
Its balm, — in camp, and court, and citadel,
Monarch and slave, glad thoughts and weary woes,
Lie bound alike in the still-heaving fetters of repose :

XXVI.

Save where upon the walls the sentinel
Hears and returns the watchword and reply ;
Or where the lover's music-murmuring spell
Calls some fair listener to her balcony :
Save where the nightingale's melodious sigh
In one sad strain pours his full heart away ;
And where Columbus on the silent sky
Gazes, communing with the stars' bright ray,
And feels his fame shall be quenchless and pure as they.

XXVII.

Above the outlook of that terrace-roof,
Their constellated characters unroll
To his deep gaze the azure-woven woof
Of immortality's emblazoned scroll.
He seemed to stand at that celestial goal,
And youth's refulgent visions congregate
Round manhood's stern sublimity of soul,
Deathlessly bright ; the planet of his fate
To the unclouded zenith rose to culminate.

XXVIII.

Ye lone, mysterious watches of the night !
Who would exchange your solitary hours
For all the gaudy palaces of light,
Curtained with sunbeams, garlanded with flowers ?
The heart, within your unmolested bowers,
Moulds the chained universe to suit its will,
And rules o'er fate from fancy's airy towers.
Thus rapt he sat, till from the eastern hill
Man's stern taskmaster, Day, beheld him sleepless still.

CANTO FOURTH.

CANTO FOURTH.



I.

ON the Alhambra's lofty outer wall
Is hung suspended, like a linnet's cage,
A trellised balcony, — whence over all
The town, from her voluptuous hermitage,
The Moorish maiden used to look ; — the sage,
To gaze aloof, in meditation deep,
On life's unintermitted pilgrimage ;
Or, when the stars their silent vigils keep,
To muse on human hopes, while human passions sleep.

II.

It was a witching spot. By day the hum
From the glad city crept along the hill,
As when the restless ocean's voices come
To mountain pastures, fragrant, green, and still.
Far down, in sunshine, danced the singing rill,
Or slumbered in the deep, embowering shade
Which clustered round the battlements ; until
At length its unseen presence was betrayed
But by a deeper verdure in the open glade.

III.

And then at night, when slept care's vulture-brood,
And feverish pulses slackened into rest,
When nature in the weeds of widowhood
Had her unsleeping, faithful bosom drest,
The nightingale from out his dewy nest
Sung, as some maiden there his love had been,
So near, his shadow fell upon her breast ;
And the moon, bathing in heaven's blue serene,
Flung her white vestments on the mountain's snowy screen.

IV.

That night, amid the highborn virgin band
Who formed the queen's unsullied coronal,
Culled from the fairest gardens of the land,
Upon one form all eyes observant fall, —
No step more proud within that lofty hall ;
Like the lithe willow by the breezes rocked,
Swam in the undulating dance her tall,
Imperial shape, — but haughty glances mocked,
While her red smiles allured, the knights who round her flocked.

V.

And now that eve hath fallen upon earth,
And the day's gorgeous pageantry is done, —
When the tumultuous hours of festal mirth
Are past, and midnight's slumbers have begun, —
A maiden's noiseless, gliding footsteps shun
Her bower of rest, and seek that balcony.
Can this be she, — this dovelike, fluttering one, —
Just now so haughty 'mid her flatterers ? she,
Who to the garden's shades looks down so anxiously ?

VI.

He who hath roamed upon a tropic shore,
Where earth in countless forms of beauty glows,
Each hour more fair than that which went before,
And over golden sands time's current flows
In melody along, — his spirit knows
How dearer far, when, at night's starry hour,
The cereus' vestal blossomings uncloset;
Thus, in her white robe, she from out the tower
Into the moonlight stepped, and blossomed like a flower.

VII.

Nor long she waited there alone, ere he
For whom her bosom 'neath its gems was beating
In bashful, trembling, fond expectancy,
From the dim garden answered to her greeting;
And soon he climbed aloft, and was repeating,
On bended knee, soft words, which in love's mart,
When youth and hope to barter gifts are meeting,
Like yellow ingots, coined by fancy's art,
Buy with their airy dross the wealth of woman's heart.

VIII.

Alike, yet differing, they were: the maid
Was an hidalgo's daughter; but the youth
Claimed no inheritance save his good blade,
His loyal bosom's hopefulness and truth,
And the queen's grace, — no trifling thing in sooth;
But still the scornful, stony eyes of pride,
And envy, with her sidelong glance uncouth,
Had scoffed at love so seeming misallied;
And therefore were they thus constrained their love to hide.

IX.

Long time in whispered tones their accents blend,
Each told to each love's fond imaginings ;
And now the stolen conference must end :
"Farewell !" he cried, "each clasping fibre clings
Unto thy mated heart, but morning's wings
Will soon unfold ; perchance it is the last,
Last time I seek thy moonlight welcomings, —
Doubt's tottering bridge must soon or late be passed,
And fortune, life, and love upon one stake be cast.

X.

"I can no longer see thy favour sought
By all the courtiers round my sovereign's throne,
And know those gilded flatterers have brought
The gifts my jealous heart would give alone ;
I cannot freeze to ice the burning tone,
Nor chain the pulses in each throbbing vein,
And with the world's cold courtliness disown
The frenzy of despair within my brain,
When others press the hand my claims might never gain.

XI.

"Thou knowest him led by whose fostering hand
From palace-peopled Genoa I came,
And through whose favour in the royal band
I was adopted, with a page's name ;
He, by his burning words and soul of flame,
Hath won the queen, with messages of peace,
An unfound empire's loyalty to claim ;
As poets sing the hero of young Greece
Sailed o'er unbeaconed seas, to seek the golden fleece.

XII.

“To his I ’ll link my fortunes ; in his train,
Through that lone sea’s unfurrowed waste I ’ll go,
And with its ransacked riches come again,
On thee their bright effulgence to bestow ;
I ’ll hang the emerald on thy neck of snow,
And twine with shining pearls thy braided hair,
And when again the summer roses blow,
I ’ll bring the wealth, the honours, gathered there,
To thy stern father’s feet, to aid a lover’s prayer.

XIII.

“I would not seek thy promised hand by stealth,
And drag thee down to poverty and scorn,
Or climb, by thy hereditary wealth,
To the bright eminence thy charms adorn ;
With equal step I ’d come, as equal born,
Or claim it as a conqueror’s reward,
From the unwilling grasp of fortune torn.
O, countless crushed affections have deplored
Gifts, in the world’s cold creed, never by them restored !

XIV.

“I cannot bear the soft, inglorious ease
Of my oft-envied lot. My temples flush,
When some mailed knight my silken fetters sees,
With his proud smile of scorn ;—that burning blush,
The spirit’s wounds from which the life-drops gush,
Beneath a warrior’s panoply I ’d hide,
And tame in strife the impulses which rush
In madness through my brain ; this boiling tide
Of youth cannot as yet in dull contentment glide.

XV.

“ Here in the land is left no warrior spoil,
Since the proud Moor swears fealty to Spain ;
The peasant, unmolested in his toil,
Roots the green laurel from his harvest-plain ;
Beyond the sea there may perchance remain
Some yet ungathered leaves ; nor need'st thou fear
To lose affection's undivided reign ;
Though the bark drift as winds and currents veer,
The steadfast cable holds, — my heart is anchored here.”

XVI.

She listened as beneath a wizard's spell,
Still as a statue on a monument ;
But the fast tears from her white eyelids fell,
And her uncertain colour came and went ;
And thronging thoughts, — her lover's banishment, —
Her lonely yearnings, — the dread ocean-storm, —
Her hopes, — his glory, — her stern sire's consent, —
Breathed breathless, as if through some marble form
A prisoned spirit poured its pulses thick and warm.

XVII.

But the benumbed soul stirred itself ; she spoke,
And her concentrated tones upon the air
Fell, like lone midnight's ghostly dial-stroke,
That calls the viewless phantoms from their lair.
“ And must we part ? Can I, alas ! not share
Thy dangers, as thy glories are for me ?
O, without shrinking would my spirit dare
To track the desert, the mysterious sea !
Death, solitude, despair, were powerless with thee.

XVIII.

“ But be it so ! — I know such words are vain ;
'Tis but the drowning wretch's frenzied clutch
At some bright bubble ; — nor would I retain
Thee from thy high endeavour ; 'neath love's touch,
My weakness shall turn adamant. How much
Nobler the heart which hopes than that which grieves !
Woman's ambitious helplessness is such
As is the climbing vine-bough's, that receives
From some tall tree a prop, where to unfold its leaves.

XIX.

“ Such hast thou been to me ; — round my young head
There clustered not the tender charities
Which their soft-flushing petals ever spread
Under the sunshine of a mother's eyes ;
No sister listened to my childish sighs,
Or girlhood's ready confidence ; — I dwelt
Alone, and taught my bosom to disguise,
Not stifle, the emotions which it felt ;
And the heart's hidden lore remained, as yet, unspelt.

XX.

“ At length thy presence taught it me. How well
Do I recall the day you came to bring
My truant falcon from the distant dell,
Where he was resting his untutored wing !
And as acquaintance grew, to my chill spring
Succeeded glorious summer. One by one,
I felt each thought to thine more closely cling ;
And then love's fount, which, darkly hid, had run
Deep in the earth, burst forth and sparkled in the sun.

XXI.

“ And then how oft amid the festal throng
I’ve inly smiled to catch thy jealous glance,
When we met coldly as I swept along,
Threading the tangled mazes of the dance ;
To my deep-brooding heart it would enhance
My wilful happiness, that thou shouldst see
My playful greeting of each knight’s advance, —
Then, in these hours of stolen privacy,
Clad in their praises, come, all tenderness, to thee.

XXII.

“ But go thou forth ; — I feel it is thy lot
To seize the gifts blind fortune hath refused.
Nor shall I be forsaken. On this spot
Where we to-night so tenderly have mused,
Thy soul shall be my comrade ; and, infused
In the still ray when silent planets shine,
My spirit shall be with thee, as it used
In the dear hours by fancy made divine,
And my according step keep equal pace with thine.”

XXIII.

At first her lip had quivered ; but at length
Her girlish form dilated, and her eye
Grew dazzling with the spirit’s steadfast strength ;
She raised her broad, white forehead to the sky,
As if her lover’s star-writ destiny
Were legible in its blue depths ; — her breast,
Heaving like ocean’s when the storm’s gone by,
Grew calm in confidence ; for she possessed
The talisman of faith to still its waves to rest.

XXIV.

She dreamed not of forgetfulness. Her soul
Had grown a part of his, — as kneaded clay
Forms in the sculptor's hand a perfect whole ;
Or as the sunbeam's iris-coloured ray
Melts to the white effulgency of day ;—
Space could not part them ; and her woman-pride,
Whose nature tracks, in love, ambition's way,
And clasps the eagle, through the storm to ride,
Went hand in hand with his, careless of aught beside.

XXV.

'T was woman's heart, — that gentle paradox, —
Yielding, yet all unshaken in its trust ;
Proud, but with steadfast constancy that mocks
At treason, though the weary fetters' rust
Corrode the heart, and faithlessness were just ;
Lending to idols attributes above
Our earthly nature, and beside the dust
To which they crumble, still content to prove
Through all vicissitudes, the deathlessness of love.

XXVI.

But when the moment came that they must sever,
And his last, lingering farewell met her ear,
Her spirit faltered in its high endeavour
And melted into tenderness and fear.
She listens, once again that voice to hear, —
Once more to catch its gently whispered tone ;
But not a footfall stirs the atmosphere.
With cheek as cold, against the pillared stone
She leaned. Earth seemed how dark ! and she, O, how alone !

XXVII.

O love, and youth, and passion ! ye who spread
Your necromantic glamour over earth !
How soon your fleeting visions perish ! — dead,
With the first kiss ; consummate in their birth !
Yet every hour of your brief life is worth
Whole centuries by cloudy care o'ercast ;
When the heart mourns the withered feelings' dearth,
And Age, as spendthriftlike we wake at last,
Grasps in his miser-hands the relics of the past.

XXVIII.

Pour, then, thy tears, sad maiden, ere thou know
How better far love's blissful agony
Is than life's barren garmenture of snow ;
Ere the warm, fleeting hues of morning die,
And the sick sun toil palely through the sky ;
Ere in distrust and doubt experience steep
Thy virgin spirit, and thy soul doth lie,
Weary with watching, unrefreshed by sleep,
And praying, all in vain, for the sad boon — to weep.

CANTO FIFTH.

CANTO FIFTH.



I.

MORNING upon the mountains. From their tops
The brook steals downward to the thirsting lands,
And at its fountains, in the crystal drops,
Bathing her snowy feet, the goddess stands ;
O'er earth's pale cheek her glowing gaze expands,
And her red lips kiss back the blushes there ;
Fresh flowers she bringeth in her roseate hands,
And, from her ivory shoulders, on the air
Float the dishevelled tresses of her sunny hair.

II.

Morning within the city. Her cool breath
To want's lethargic-slumbering retreat
Cometh, like resurrection unto death,
To call its inmates to the busy street.
The early husbandman, with dusty feet,
Beareth his dewy fruit from door to door ;
In the thronged market-place the townsmen meet,
Or, kneeling on the minster's marble-floor,
Crave grace for sins, next day to be rehearsed once more.

III.

Morning upon the ocean. Like the motes
Which hang suspended in the daylight's beam,
With tiny sails, the flocks of fisher-boats
Put from the shore, and glimmer on the stream ;
Upon the waves the moon's reflected gleam,
Scattered at night like snow-flakes, white and cold,
Fades, as the misty memory of a dream,
And with a monarch's step, majestic, bold,
Treads the triumphant sun o'er tapestries of gold.

IV.

In a small seaport, at that morning hour,
The congregated population crowd
To where the bell from the gray convent-tower
Utters its vibratory voice aloud.
Within, proud manly forms in prayer are bowed,
And to the holy priest their sins confess, —
That, when their deep contrition they have vowed,
His absolution may their spirits bless,
And send them, with white hands, to ocean's wilderness.

V.

Strengthened and calm, they leave that solemn rite,
The incense through the breathless air ascending,
Where seraph faces shed their pictured light
And the deep organ-tones with prayer are blending.
And now they issue forth, the crowd attending,
Where their scant squadron's sea-worn vessels ride, —
The cannon's lips of bronze the silence rending, —
And many a maiden's pensive glances eyed
Francisco's graceful mien at his stern chieftain's side.

VI.

The signal ! lo, the free flag climbs aloft ;
With flowing sails they skim the plashing wave ; —
Farewell to those that prayed and those who scoffed ;
Farewell, gay town, green field, and mountain-cave.
In silent groups, the most unthoughtful grave,
With wistful, homeward eyes, the sailors stand.
The blue hills sink, the bluer billows pave
Their path, — the salt breeze hath no scent of land ;
Home is behind, — before, wide, weary wastes expand.

VII.

Glad is the heart upon the bounding seas,
When the white furrows track their crystal plain,
And to the brain a thousand memories
Of gently whispering pine-boughs come again,
While the full clouds of snowy canvas strain
Towards youthful haunts we soon shall see once more ; —
But they, O, how could they their souls constrain,
When each morn lit a desert as before,
And in day's parting beam there shone no glimpse of shore ?

VIII.

Hours became days ; days, weeks ; weeks, months ; but still,
Throughout their dreary ocean-banishment,
They bowed to his unconquerable will.
But many a moody glance was homeward sent,
And died at length the sailors' merriment ;
Till, day by day, dissatisfaction grew, —
In deeply muttered accents finding vent, —
Until the boldest of the chafing crew
Mastered in their revolt those who would fain stand true.

IX.

“How long must last our desperate pursuit
Of your imaginary paradise?
And what would profit us its golden fruit,
If you, a stranger, must possess the prize?
Believe you home is nothing in our eyes?
That Valour can stand resolute and stern
When famine’s grisly apparitions rise
From waves where no familiar beacons burn?
Nay think it not, — while means suffice us, we return.”

X.

Earth’s keenest torture for the soaring mind
Is, that when honour’s height is almost scaled,
Its airy blossomings must be resigned,
And all, for one last step, hath naught availed;
Yet, even by sedition thus assailed,
His spirit quailed not, though his nerveless hands
Fell quivering by his side, and his cheek paled;
But his eye kindled like the forge’s brands,
And with calm lip he spoke his pleadings and commands.

XI.

Francisco stood beside him, — still and brave,
Ready his chieftain’s destiny to share;
He brought the standard Isabella gave,
And flung its blazoned folds upon the air;
Columbus took it, and with inward prayer,
Lifting his ardent glances to the sky,
Invoked the blessed emblem pictured there,
And not in vain; his faith, his purpose high,
Rose up like angel-guards in his extremity.

XII.

“Lower down the boat,” he cried, — the men obeyed, —
“Give me a pittance of the meanest food,
And be there one firm heart, one loyal blade,
Let them be with me in my solitude ;
I’ve sworn this flag, once wet in paynim blood,
Should over India’s ransomed nations wave,
And my soul changeth not its steadfast mood.
No half-withheld, unknightly aid I crave ;
Alone, I’ll go to seek an empire or a grave.

XIII.

“But will ye falter, now ye almost clasp
Your labour’s fruit, your constancy’s reward, —
Now that ye hold an empire in your grasp,
Without a title-deed save your good sword ?
Is ’t I, a stranger, who am thus abhorred ?
Your fame shall not be less ; your race shall hold
Sway o’er the wealth of each barbaric horde ; —
Or, should that promised land prove poor and cold,
Our queen hath gratitude ; Spain lacketh not for gold.”

XIV.

Amid the selfish struggles of the world,
Where mocking scorn and envy’s traitor-dart
Are at the worthier by the ignoble hurled
In fame’s arena, traffic’s toiling mart,
Some starry impulses will still impart
Their light to eyes through grovelling eyelids blind,
Rousing the slumbering warders of the heart,
Quickening the kernel in its stony rind,
Till pulse, eye, thought, resolve, attest our kindred kind.

XV.

They paused, awaiting some heroic word
Whose tone might quell the treacherous soul of doubt ;
And then the page's voice the silence stirred,
Putting that wavering mutiny to rout : —
“ I 'll not return to hear the rabble flout ;
I follow by my chieftain's lonely side.”
His fickle followers answer with a shout,
“ We, too, will in our loyalty abide ;
Till the third sun hath set, our course shall still be tried.”

XVI.

Onward, still onward, o'er a placid sea, —
The dolphins flashing through its crystal screen,
The unveering eastern breezes fresh and free,
And the blue heavens unclouded and serene, —
And now the land-bird's truant wing is seen ;
A freshly broken branch of budding willow
Garlands the hoary wave with tender green ;
And, beckoning from its undulating pillow,
A human form floats past, on the dark-heaving billow.

XVII.

Through the lone midnight watch Columbus stood,
Listening to catch the billows' distant roll ;
While 'mid the gloom, across the formless flood,
His eager vision sought the spirit's goal :
And certainty along Hope's pathway stole
Under the fading stars, till when the day
Painted with glowing tints creation's scroll,
Glimmering beneath its first reflected ray,
The virgin, blushing land in unveiled beauty lay.

XVIII.

I leave in silence the repentant crew,
Crowding their leader's clemency to claim, —
The exultant rapture of the steadfast few,
Glad in their long-anticipated fame, —
The Indian's terror at the cannon's flame,
His adoration of the stranger guest, —
The faltering step with which the matron came,
With her scared infant clinging to her breast,
To yield to foreign hands the Eden they possessed.

XIX.

With big, round eyes the wondering children creep,
Bringing fresh fruit, to clasp the strangers' knees ;
While more remote the tawny maidens peep,
Like startled fawns, from the thick cocoa-trees.
In mute astonishment, the savage sees
An altar rise, and hears the anthem's strain ;
Strange incense overloads the scented breeze,
And the bright cross, erected on the plain,
Claims the broad, fertile land for Christendom and Spain.

XX.

It were a thankless office to relate
The Spaniard's influence on that peaceful land,
Until untenanted and desolate
The captive Indians' palm-thatched cabins stand ;
How the invader, with a greedy hand,
Tore from their trembling grasp its shining store,
And with the scourge enforced his harsh command,
Bidding them mine the mountain's golden core,
And to a dungeon's roof changed that enchanting shore.

XXI.

We will not ask how 't was Columbus felt,
To hear the islanders' imploring groan ;
His century, the country where he dwelt,
Took little heed of slavery's sad moan.
Enough that long-sought empire was his own ;
His ship must track its scarcely faded wake,
And bear its tributes to his sovereign's throne ;
And he must leave those beings, for whose sake
That sovereign sent him, at her name to blench and quake.

XXII.

No joy at that departure. The hard chain
Eats closer to the fibre than before ;
An iron-hearted colony remain
In stern possession of the trampled shore.
And there Francisco stayeth, to explore
The treasures of that golden-fruited soil,
Until his chieftain should return once more, —
When he to Spain would bear his garnered spoil,
And love, fame, honours, wealth, should recompense his toil.

XXIII.

The canvas is unfurled, — the anchor weighed ;
Off ! ere the land-breeze in the sun wax faint ;
The parting cup is quaffed, — last words are said ;
Not all-unheard, perchance, the Indian's plaint, —
But on those whispering waves, what doubt could taint
Feelings which felt that zephyr's freshening force ?
“ Farewell ! commend us to our patron saint.”
Homeward the vessel speeds her easy course ;
Ambition's trumpet tones drown pity and remorse.

CANTO SIXTH.

CANTO SIXTH.



I.

LAND of the tropic! climate of the sun!
Where plenty pours from her exhaustless horn
Gifts, by no bitter sweat of labor won,
Or from the churlish grasp of nature torn, —
With every sand of every hour is born
Fresh loveliness to thy prolific earth;
In each star-peopled night, full day, and tender morn,
Some elemental glory hath its birth,
Winning sad hearts to joy, unthoughtful ones to mirth.

II.

I tread thy soil, — I feel thy incense blend
With the soft breath of the expiring hours;
I see thy setting sun his radiance send,
A kingly prisoner, from his cloud-built towers, —
And the thick planets, like celestial flowers,
Blossom in the blue firmament, and there
People with thoughts of heaven those heavenly bowers;
To night's cool kiss my throbbing brow I bare,
And morning's breezes bathe my moist, uplifted hair.

III.

Around my steps the jasmine buds unfold
Their snowy petals ; in the forest-shades
The orange hangs its clustering orbs of gold ;
O'er the savanna and the open glades
The rustling cane-leaves spread their glossy blades ;
The moon, as through some marble fane, from high,
Glimmers amid the palm-trees' colonnades,
And in the quiet of the noontide sky,
Their tall, lithe stems stand swaying silently.

IV.

Well wast thou fitted for the gentle race
Whose woven cabins clustered on the plain, —
Who found the woods sufficient dwelling-place,
And o'er thy soil held unmolested reign, —
To whom the forest was a holy fane,
And earth an altar, whose glad incense went,
With man's glad thoughts, to heaven. Beneath no chain
Was the wild freedom of their footsteps bent ;
Slavery had not ordained her black disfigurement.

V.

Why must it be so? Answer, ye who tread
The climes where luxury is toil's reward, —
Where man must fight the tempest for his bread,
Not pluck it from earth's still-replenished hoard.
Ye come, content not with the pleasures stored
In this broad granary, but ye would fain
Join all the gifts each differing zone hath poured ;
Here, though, the Saxon cannot toil, — in vain
His unnerved hand would break thy soft, Circean chain.

VI.

The lesson was a brief one. Day by day,
And drop by drop, the bitter cup was filled,
Until the goblet turned to crumbling clay,
And in a shower of blood its contents spilled.
With hopeless earnestness Francisco willed
More gentle treatment ; — mercy melts like snow,
When fires of avarice its paleness gild.
But the crushed worm became a serpent foe.
Weak tyrants ! knew ye not, men gather as they sow ?

VII.

And yet not wholly thankless were the tears —
For manliest lids with tenderest dews are wet, —
With which he strove to win his rude compeers
To counsels gracious and compassionate.
And often his indignant succour met
Some harsh injustice of the ruthless train ;
Vainly, alas ! But let not man forget
That Pity's bread, cast on the watery main,
The giver — after many days — shall find again.

VIII.

When the enamoured midnight-breeze was drinking
The dew-drops from the woodbine's floating hair,
And the late Pleiades to rest were sinking,
In the lone thicket shone a crimson glare.
What do those dusky demon figures there ?
What means that muttered compact wild and stern ?
What booty shall those leagued assassins share ?
Ah ! Greed and Cruelty, full soon, shall learn
How fierce the eating fires of kindled Hate can burn.

IX.

They met in secret, and they part by stealth ;
To-morrow shall be lit the avenging flame,
To-morrow give again their plundered wealth,
And make atonement for their daughters' shame.
To-morrow the invader's hated name
Shall be a thing that was, and they shall brood
No longer on their wrongs, subdued and tame.
Their fatal darts with venom are imbued ;
The oath is sworn, — leaves rustle, — all is solitude.

X.

But no ! a graceful girlish form is creeping
Where the low, sheltering boughs in darkness wave.
Her pulses throb, her eye is wet with weeping,
But her firm heart the stripling's life shall save,
Or die for one whose gentle nature gave
Soft looks, when sterner brows would darkly lower.
Passion, devotion, in those climates, crave
No sickly culture ; in one glowing hour
The bursting bud expands, and lo ! love's fadeless flower !

XI.

Now, like a Titan waking from his sleep,
Up the piled mountain-clouds to heaven to climb,
The summer sun, emerging from the deep,
Treads to the zenith, — lonely and sublime.
Careless alike of innocence and crime,
He pours on all his broad, impartial ray ;
But when he sinks in mellow evening time,
Upon far other scenes his beams shall play
Than nature's peacefulness, which ushered in the day.

XII.

With haggard eye, as one of mind bereft,
Mahala tracked his shadows o'er the plain ;
There was no hopeless hope of mercy left ;
A thousand tortures rack her aching brain, —
But though her sheltering bosom's shield be vain,
She still could die with him, so nobly fair ;
Could she no clemency, no respite, gain,
'T were sweet to cling in clasping fondness there,
And, if she might not save, his destiny to share.

XIII.

But a quick thought brings rapture to her grief ;
Despair was changed to energy ; — she twined
A basket from the palm-tree's glossy leaf,
Placed there what hoarded ingots she could find,
Beneath fresh flowers and the pomegranate's rind, —
Then, with a throbbing cheek and drooping lid,
She sought Francisco, in the shade reclined,
And, with her broken words and gestures, bid
Him follow to the covert where that wealth was hid.

XIV.

He tracks the bounding footsteps of the maiden,
Among the tall primeval forest-trees ;
'Mid shrubs, with flowers and early dew-drops laden,
Which yield their wealth to every rifling breeze ;
Through mountain streamlets, gurgling round their knees,
And dells, where the old hills were rent asunder,
Whose sheltered depths the sunbeam never sees ;
O'er cliffs, with sunless ocean-caverns under,
Shook by the sullen wave's reverberating thunder.

XV.

Upon the undulating hills which lie
Behind the hamlet's busy neighborhood,
With conelike summit piercing to the sky
Through its white zone of clouds, a mountain stood.
Around its base, in hoary solitude,
Unbroken by the sound of human speech,
The forests dip their branches in the flood
From the gray rocks ;— or in a lengthened reach,
The whispering billows die along the silvery beach.

XVI.

He clambered up its ledges with his guide
To a still grotto, curtained o'er with green,
Whence one might gaze, secure and unespied,
Like the lone eagle, through the leafy screen.
He looks ;— O God ! the horrors of that scene !
Where Carnage treads the devastated glen,
And woman, his red harvestings to glean,
Follows, — as when the tigress from her den
Leads forth her thirsting whelps, to taste the blood of men.

XVII.

There, one, alone, hemmed in by numbers, clasps —
Like the fierce boar at bay — his broken lance ;
Another, weltering in his life-blood, grasps
His gold in death's still palpitating trance.
There was the hoarse, stern oath, — the blazing glance ;
Until, with palsied arm, and reeking knife,
Despair became too dark for utterance ;
And in mute fury, gasping in the strife,
With one last shivering sob, each yielded up his life.

XVIII.

Francisco, shuddering, appalled, amazed, —
His hand, unconscious, clutching at his steel, —
Upon those gory saturnalia gazed,
Whose aspect made each curdling drop congeal.
But vain had been one champion's frantic zeal
Against those vengeful thousands ; — on the ground
He sank, with an unsyllabled appeal
To heaven, until where red Revenge had frowned,
The moon's white footsteps trod, and midnight reigned profound.

XIX.

And all the while, the maiden, at his side
Knelt, trembling like the aspen on its stem,
Yet glorying, with her nature's artless pride,
In her successful, loving stratagem ;
Some natural pity, too, she felt for them
Who bled below ; — but they, with ruthless hand,
Had plucked off pity's pearly diadem,
And loosed compassion's silver girdle-band ; —
How could she weep for them, the spoilers of her land ?

XX.

Morn came and went, — another and another ;
No trace remained of where, in blood, had been
Man's retribution from his trodden brother ;
Save, on the silent plain, a deeper green,
Or where, perchance, amid the grass were seen
Some scattered bones, — ghastly and glittering white ;
And the vexed Indian's heart, again serene,
Sank into slumber with the cloudless night,
And woke again to joy with day's reviving light.

XXI.

And so they sojourned in their hermitage,
Amid the strife forgotten or unsought,
Until her kindred's transitory rage
Had been appeased ; — and there Mahala brought
The simple viands of her land, — unbought,
But by the easy toil which serves to bring
Variety to life unstirred by thought,
Where autumn's fruits blend with the buds of spring,
And time, through sun and shade, flits by on noiseless wing.

XXII.

Who had not felt that land's omnipotence
Over the gnawing progeny of care, —
Bringing to each intoxicated sense
Fresh tribute-gifts from ocean, earth, and air ;
Where nature seems ungrudgingly to share
Her bounties to all comers, who may strive,
Vainly, to drain the bright enchantments there ?
Blest in her bounties, had she naught to give
But the one single and sufficient boon, — to live.

XXIII.

Its fetters grew upon him, as the vine
Flingeth its verdant, purple-laden yoke —
Whose clinging tendrils noiselessly entwine —
Around the shrouded sternness of the oak.
The sweet, transcendent stillness was unbroke
By man's derision or by life's turmoil ;
From unmolested slumber he awoke
To search the forest for its ripened spoil,
Or, in the dreamy shade, pursue some gentle toil.

XXIV.

Mahala in his presence ever kept ;
Her joyous steps his wandering path attended,
She watched o'er him at noontide when he slept,
And in her happy dreams his image blended.
When the sun's feet his golden stairs ascended,
She hung their cave with many a tropic flower ;
And when day's long, unbroken reign was ended,
She still was with him in that marriage-bower, —
Nature their only priest, and modesty her dower.

XXV.

And thus Francisco and Mahala wed.
Life was like nature, all in blossom's drest ;
And passion, from exhaustless coffers shed
Fresh blandishments upon her climate's guest :
And many a sport was theirs ; — upon the crest
Of morning's billow, cradled there, they lay,
And crept, at noon, like wood-birds to their nest ;
Where the half-slumbering sea-breeze, tired of play,
Folded his dewy wings through the long, sultry day.

XXVI.

And she, unthoughtful in her fond devotion,
Carolled in spirit like the soaring lark ;
Impetuous, artless, gentle, all emotion,
It was her being's paradise to mark
His features — as the Hebrew maid the ark
Where dwelt her God — with love no doubt could mar.
Glittering in gladness, as the fire-fly's spark,
Her eye played round him near, — and when afar
Beaconed his coming steps, like Hero's love-lit star.

XXVII.

And thus Francisco and Mahala wed.
She for unchanged eternity ; but he
Felt passion's airy fetters turn to lead,
And that voluptuous summer-dream to be
Not slumber, but the spirit's lethargy.
He yearned once more to hear his kindred tongue,
Once more his kindred's lineaments to see ;
Ambition's myriad seeds to vigour sprung ;—
Let the worn heart seek rest, — it is not for the young.

XXVIII.

Except, perchance, where comes some lovesick boy
To forest-cloisters, — an untensured monk, —
To revel in imaginary joy,
With passion's purple-clustering juices drunk.
But through the growing oak's vine-shrouded trunk,
And manhood's brain, pillowed in luxury's lap,
Until it hath in time's inertness sunk,
Pours the warm life-blood and the circling sap,
And struggles into growth through every rifted gap.

XXIX.

And she, Dolores, that confiding one,
Who told with nightly prayers love's rosary,
Counting with paler cheek each added sun,
Mingling his thought with heaven's on bended knee, —
She, whose proud spirit bore him company,
Or led the way, upon ambition's stream, —
She haunted all the paths of memory ;
Her white robe through the pillared woods would gleam,
And her still, saintly presence peopled midnight's dream.

XXX.

Month followed month, — and daily more and more
Flushed the bright fever on his sunken cheek ;
Moody he roams the solitary shore,
Or gazes, wistful, from the mountain-peak ;
When, lo ! emerging like a glimmering streak
Of morning sunshine on a dusky cloud,
The absent ship returns, fresh spoil to seek.
She nears, — she anchors, — sullenly and proud
She rides the vassal waves. Land-sick, to shore they crowd.

XXXI.

They hear the story of their comrades' woes,
They swear revenge, — they tell to him, in turn,
Columbus' triumph o'er his silenced foes,
And honours wait Francisco's quick return.
Again the fires of avarice shall burn, —
Once more the Indian writhe in hopeless pain ;
Again his toiling, fainting soul shall learn
The rigour of a taskmaster, — again
Lust, avarice, cruelty have riveted his chain.

XXXII.

He goes ; — upon the beach Mahala stands,
In self-forgetfulness no longer shy ;
Her heaving chest, wild gaze, and quivering hands
Express her bosom's speechless agony.
Far as her straining vision can descry,
She tracks his fading sail with glazing look ;
Then, with one shriek, to which the hills reply,
Flies to their cavern's desolated nook, —
An island Ariadne, wretched and forsook.

XXXIII.

Hath earth no retribution for her sorrows? Hark!
The tropic tempest riseth from his lair,
Awakes his slumbering legions, fierce and dark,
And flings his coal-black mane upon the air;
Beneath his tread, the trembling hills lay bare
Their forest-covered breasts, — the rifted rocks
Lie shivered by his lightning-lances there;
The fountains swell to floods, — the whirlwind mocks
The trembling earth, that quakes with the mad thunder's shocks.

XXXIV.

And she! — O, well the elements expressed,
With the fierce tumult of their fearful fray,
The storm of anguish battling in her breast,
And sweeping its humanity away!
Amid the crashing trees her footsteps stray, —
Unconscious of the tempest's dread alarms, —
To a bare cliff drenched by the ocean spray;
There, 'mid her pangs, a wakening being warms
Her thrilling heart, — she clasps an infant in her arms.

XXXV.

One long, absorbing gaze of rapture spoke
A mother's welcome, — then upon her brain
Its added weight of desolation broke;
That it, which close beneath her heart had lain, —
That heart whose throbbings through each tiny vein
Had sent an equal pulse, — that it should know
The torture of her sorrows' galling chain!
Earth had no refuge for that weary woe;
Ere its lip drained her breast, she plunged; — they slept below.

XXXVI.

And where was he, the father of that child,
His offspring and his victim? — O'er the side
Of the still-plashing vessel gazing, he beguiled
Memory, who tracked him with avenging stride,
By hope's illusive shapes of love and pride:
"She'll soon forget the pain our parting brought; —
Some Indian youth will win her for his bride; —
Her love was showered upon me all-unsought"; —
Yet still her clinging look was graven on his thought.

XXXVII.

But, lo! the storm, along its ocean path,
Maketh each wave a crystal precipice.
"Furl, furl the canvas, ere its sudden wrath
Be on our heads!" — Too late! — the billows hiss,
Like crested serpents in the wild abyss,
That coil themselves upon the hungry tide.
Seared by the lightning's devastating kiss,
The splintered mast comes crashing down the side,
And landward on the wave all-rudderless they ride.

XXXVIII.

Soon though the avenging tempest hurries past,
Upon its ebon wings, in fearful flight,
And the unvexèd ocean sinketh fast,
A mirror for the evening's glowing light.
As if the sun had broken in his might
To where earth's hidden ruby-caverns lie,
He pours his crimson glories on the sight
Through stalactites of mist, — till sea and sky
Blend their magnificence in glorious unity.

XXXIX.

But on the wrinkled earth man's eye may catch
The traces where its fiery footsteps went.
The giant oak, the flakes of cabin-thatch,
Are both, like cobwebs, by the whirlwind rent.
Silent is nature's voice of merriment ;
Rank upon rank, — as in a warrior-grave, —
The prostrate monarchs of the woods are bent,
Save where some lonely palm's torn feathers wave,
Grieving, like champion-knight, o'er those he might not save.

XL.

The shipwrecked ones return, to seek repair
For their torn vessel ; — crowding to the shore,
The landsmen lend a comrade's active care
To those who gladly greet that land once more.
What is Francisco wildly kneeling o'er,
And clasping with a miser's trembling hand?
What hath the ocean yielded from its store?
There, wafted by the sobbing breeze to land,
Mahala and her child lay weltering on the strand.

CANTO SEVENTH.

CANTO SEVENTH.



I.

ONCE more in Spain. The sun's meridian light
Upon the undulating landscape falls,
And in his yellow radiance, gleaming white,
Shine the tall palace-shafts and capitals.
Amid the clustering trees, its marble walls
Look proudly out in a majestic mass ;
Like crystal willows, waving waterfalls
Shed their bright tear-drops on the grateful grass,
Lending eve's dewy breath, where noon's hot breezes pass.

II.

Enter with me this lofty pillared room,
Where, through broad windows and the open door,
A screen of vine-leaves sheds a tender gloom,
And flings its flickering shadows on the floor.
The walls are glowing with their pictured store,
And rich with carvings exquisitely quaint,
From out whose framework living glances pour,
Such as Velasquez and Murillo paint, —
Stern hero, — laughing boy, — and rapt, ecstatic saint.

III.

A lady sits within that hall alone,
Her broidery fallen from her claspèd hands, —
Heedless that all its splendours are her own,
That she is heir to those ancestral lands ;
Unmarked the statue-studded forest stands,
Through whose arcades far-stretching valleys gleam ;
'T is naught to her that there her will commands ;
To her unresting gaze those glories seem
But as the scenery of some unquiet dream.

IV.

She starts, — she treads the tessellated tile ;
She listens, — heaves a disappointed sigh ;
She strives the lagging moments to beguile
With fragments of some chanted minstrelsy ;
In vain, the unfinished notes in silence die.
She marks the dial-shade : — “ Why comes he not ?
How tardily time's leaden pinions fly !
O, without him, cherished and unforgot,
This fair inheritance were but a desert spot ! ”

V.

It was Dolores' voice, — 't was she who stood,
Clad in her just-maturing beauty, there ;
'T was she, who in that gorgeous solitude
Breathed, with impatient lip, love's ardent prayer.
Francisco had returned, — but must repair
First with due homage to his sovereign's feet,
For the bright guerdons of her fostering care,
Before, with joy through absence doubly sweet,
He come, from loving lips fit recompense to meet.

VI.

At length — at length, — 't is he ! — but is it so ?
Can this be he, her trusting bosom's lord,
Robed in a pilgrim's sullen garb of woe ?
Where are his floating plumes, his jewelled sword,
His golden, knightly spurs, — the queen's reward ?
Where is his radiant eye's effulgent light,
Through whose soft glance his earnest spirit poured ?
Where is his stately step of conscious might,
And the warm smile to speak the rapture of delight ?

VII.

But yes, 't is he ! — O, lovers' eyes are keen ! —
His aspect melted down her maiden pride ;
Affection reigned where bashfulness had been : —
“ Belovèd ! it is I ! it is thy bride !
It matters not that fortune have denied
Her fickle smiles ; — this bosom is a mine
Where gems of purer ray than hers abide.
I am the last, the loneliest of my line ;
Their gathered wealth thou seest around ; 't is ours, — 't is
thine.”

VIII.

Alas ! the crumbling clay that Love had moulded !
One radiant greeting from his lashes beamed ;
Once to his heart he held her, closely folded,
Dearer than had imagination dreamed ;
Once kissed the silken sunshine which had streamed
Upon his shoulder, where her tresses fell ;
And then relentless recollection gleamed
Upon his happiness. Ah ! who could tell
The sadness of that mingled welcome and farewell !

IX.

“Dearest! it is not that ;— I might have brought,”
He said, “uncounted jewels to thy feet ;
But of those stainless gifts of nature, naught
Were from this spotted hand an offering meet ;
I might have come as princes come to greet
Their brides, — with star, and plume, and knightly crest ;
Thus at the courtiers’ board I’ve had my seat ;
But ill that garb my darkened heart expressed ;
Could they have looked on it, these weeds had fitted best.”

X.

And then, with heavy eyelids earthward bent,
And faltering accents, he recounted all
The story of his island banishment ;
The rescue, the temptation, and the fall.
“I’ve made thy bosom my confessional,
Shrive me,” he murmured, “with one farewell look ;
Guilt must divide us, but whate’er befall,
There never yet was Knightly heart could brook
That falsehood’s stain should blot the scutcheon of Love’s
book.

XI.

“Methought I had a dream. I saw a boy
Playing upon a flowery meadow-side ;
In the glad mirthfulness of childhood’s joy
He launched his tiny squadrons in their pride ;
And, as he saw the mimic vessels glide,
Hailed them with ringing laughter from the brink ;
Then bent his red lip o’er the crystal tide,
His golden tresses dripping there, to drink ;
Then on that flowery sod seemed in soft sleep to sink.

XII.

“Another morn. The boy had grown a youth ;
A gentle, white-robed form there seemed to be,
Which, with a maiden’s lovingness and truth,
Through a fair valley bore him company.
Earth, ocean, air, were all serenity ;—
But then, methought, was heard a trumpet’s tone,
And that bright angel-figure seemed to flee,
Or melt upon the air with plaintive moan ;
And ’mid stern warrior-forms the youth was left alone.

XIII.

“Another morn. There rose a gloomy wood,
Amid whose shades the golden fruitage glowed ;
But o’er the red earth, fetlock-deep in blood,
Upon a coal-black steed, that gallant rode ;
And in his merciless career he strode
Upon a milk-white fawn, whose bosom heaved,
Whose eyes an unforgetful fondness showed,
As ’t were a maiden of her love bereaved,
Dying from her sad loss, yet faithful while she grieved.

XIV.

“Then, dimly fearful through the murky sky,
A grisly cavalcade behind him ride,
Who, though that phantom courser seemed to fly,
Gain on his flashing hoofs with every stride.
The foremost neared,—‘At length thou’rt mine,’ he cried,—
Clutched at the bridle,—raised a bloody knife,—
And Passion and Remorse rode side by side.
There I awoke, amid a ghastly strife ;—
I was that shivering boy !—that wilderness was life !”

XV.

She listened, like a tearless Niobe ;
All her heart's offspring, in their blooming pride,
Slain by each spoken shaft of agony.
She stirred not, spoke not, trembled not, nor sighed ;
But her eye froze, its lids dilated wide,
And from the pupil, like an inky well,
Its azure curtainings were drawn aside ;
Her swanlike neck swam on her breast's white swell,
And clasped upon her knees her clay-cold fingers fell.

XVI.

But sorrow came not with tempestuous wrath,
Trampling through summer's devastated bowers ;
It was as if in June's enamelled path,
And upon meadows blossoming with flowers, —
In the serenity of noontide hours, —
Silent and chill the frost-king should appear,
With wand of ice, from out his arctic towers,
And Nature, flushing with the youthful year,
Should lie — inanimate — stretched on her frozen bier.

XVII.

Alas, the anguish of that mute distress,
With all its blank eternity of woe !
But the unsounded heart can never guess
What undeveloped strength may lie below ;
And often, with the martyr's steadfast glow,
Will the soul revel in the funeral pyre,
And, careless of the scorching embers, go
To tread, like some pale saint, the harmless fire,
Listening, with charmèd ear, to a celestial lyre.

XVIII.

“Thou hast done well,” at length she said, “and grief
For thy sad sin shall win its recompense ;
Though watered all with tears, our path is brief
Through the allurements or the wounds of sense.
My cheated love had been a weak defence
Against the gnawing pain, the scorpion sting,
Which still attest the soul’s omnipotence,
Even when ambition’s fetters round it cling,
And luxury strives in vain to still its murmuring.

XIX.

“Thou know’st I lost my mother when a child ;
Yet, through life’s hours of cheerless solitude,
I’ve thought a spirit, pure and undefiled,
Looked on me with an aspect which subdued
Distrust and grief, as her sweet presence would,
And beckoned me with tender, mournful eyes
To peace, where naught of sorrow should intrude ;
I’d thought thy love to be that paradise ;—
But no ! ’t was not of earth ;—it beckoned to the skies.

XX.

“And there thou’lt follow, dear one, — wilt thou not ?—
Beyond this earthly scene of doubt and fear,
To where our present griefs shall be forgot,
And memory die, or only make more dear,
With its soft moonlight, that glad atmosphere.
And there that gentle, timorous fawn shall stand, —
Dreading no more the hunter’s cruel spear, —
Within the precincts of that peaceful land
Where shine the eternal mansions, — builded not by hand.

XXI.

“Thy love for me has been a golden gleam,
That came my spirit’s solitude to bless ;
And its remembered sweetness still shall beam
Upon my path of darkling loneliness.
’T is joy I am not doomed to love thee less, —
’T is joy with thee to kiss the chastening rod, —
Heaven is half won, when men their sins confess ;
Have courage on the desert to be trod ; —
This bleeding heart I give to memory and God.”

XXII.

O, as a fountain’s silver murmuring
To him who treads Arabia’s sultry sands, —
As if some shadowing cloud should spread its wing
Where, with parched lip, that fainting traveller stands, —
As by a martyr ’mid his burning brands
There stood a visible angel, — on his soul
Fell the sad music of those soft commands ;
Or as the storm-tossed bird, where billows roll,
Would hear his mate’s recall, and see his leafy goal.

XXIII.

He knelt before her, bent his lip and brow
Lowly upon her hand, looked up, and spoke : —
“Never, Dolores ! never, until now, ‘
Knew I my nature ; at thy words, the yoke
Which bound its nobler impulses is broke.
Calm as a child upon its mother’s knee,
Within my breast a seraph soul hath woke,
Which with an emulous flight shall follow thee
On, to its native heaven of blest tranquillity.

XXIV.

“The thought of thy dear face shall be my guide,
As erst in paths ambition’s hues imbued,
So now in those thy steps have sanctified.
Nor shall my tears, in bitterness of mood,
Scorch the sad earth to barren solitude ;
But rather in the wilderness shall make
Greenness and gladness, where their drops are strewed.
I will go forth to action, and will break
The bread of love and pity for thy loving sake.”

XXV.

One kiss ; — they parted, — he to turn again,
With widowed spirit, to the paths of life,
And feel the links of memory’s viewless chain
Drag him to earth in the soul’s fluttering strife.
And she ! that fond one, — that unwedded wife, —
To kindle on love’s shrine devotion’s fire,
Plunge to her heart the sacrificial knife,
Burn there that heart to ashes, and aspire,
With her unquenched affections, higher still and higher.

CANTO EIGHTH.

CANTO EIGHTH.



I.

YEARS have rolled on, and in a Spanish town
We stand again. The summer sun hath set,
Laying aside awhile his fiery crown,
Though its reflected glories linger yet.
Within the fragrant garden-place have met
The townsfolk of each differing degree,
Where the thick flowers with moonlight dew are wet,
To give those grateful hours to social glee,
While music's tones enhance night's soft serenity.

II.

Beneath the trees there are young lovers keeping
Their vigils, lighted by dark, starry eyes ;
Beneath the guard-house porch are soldiers sleeping,
Careless how each unvarying moment flies ;
From the thronged walks a thousand voices rise,
Jests on each lip, mirth on each countenance,
O'ercanopied by those transparent skies ;
And youth's glad pulses with the music dance, —
When, lo ! a breathless pause arrests all utterance.

III.

Laughter is hushed, as if the rippling surge
Were froze to ice at some magician's tone ;
The wailing trumpets pour a funeral dirge ;
The crowd — like grain by one broad sickle mown —
Kneel ; and the soldiers, from their bench of stone,
Start up and form in martial homage there ;
On every face a sacred awe is shown ;
No noble now so haughty as may dare
Defy, — and none so poor but may that feeling share.

IV.

For, issuing from the gray cathedral's porch,
A long procession meets the people's sight,
Lit by the glare of taper and of torch,
Borne at its side by citizen and knight.
To some sick spirit — ere in viewless flight
It soar to realms no fleshly foot hath trod —
Goeth the church's latest, holiest rite ;
His grace, who shed his blood on Calvary's sod,
The sacred, visible emblem of the present God.

V.

Leaving the scene of quick-reviving mirth,
Our vision follows to the darkened room,
Where, now unclasped from the embrace of earth,
The parting spirit passes to its doom.
There — his soul veiled by death's fast-gathering gloom —
Doth the long-absent hero reappear ;
Behold him on the threshold of the tomb,
White with the snows of many a thankless year, —
He who upon the world bestowed a hemisphere !

VI.

It is no time for tears. We weep for those
Who strive to clasp the earth from which they sprung,
Climbing not up, but downward, — who, her woes
Unheeding, walked life's sufferings among, —
Unto whose clay-stopped ears unheard were sung
The melodies of Faith, — in whose career
To heaven, earth's gifts, as obstacles, were flung, —
Who toiled, with bawble wreaths to deck their bier,
Or deemed war's laurel grew in heaven's pure atmosphere.

VII.

We may lament for friendship's broken chain,
The severed ties of love, the hopes of youth, —
And bitterer still for those who toil in vain,
Blind to the steadfast symmetry of Truth,
Or kneel to idols crumbling and uncouth ;
But they who for our nature's hungry dearth
Have broke one loaf, have shed one tear of ruth, —
The wages of their toils are not of earth ;
Go they to their reward, — death is not death, but birth.

VIII.

And there he lay, — life's pulses ebbing fast,
But still his brow unruffled and sublime ;
As one who with prophetic vision passed
Unblenching onward through the wrecks of Time.
A wanderer, bronzed by India's ardent clime,
Is sitting at his side ; methinks that grace,
Marred as with sorrow rather than by crime,
Hath in my mind an unforgotten trace ; —
Yes, o'er his chieftain's death-bed bends Francisco's face !

IX.

The solemn rite was past, — and he was left
Within that dim confessional alone,
To speak to one of earthly hope bereft,
Of heavenly hopefulness, in friendship's tone.
If sins were told, let them remain unknown ;
But ere that burning gaze was quenched in night,
And his pale lips breathed forth their latest moan,
Wild words, like these, painted the forms of light
Which peopled fever's dreams with visions strange and bright.

X.

“Methought upon a headland's utmost verge,
In youth's intensity of hope, I strayed ;
From the broad western ocean came the surge
That round my path in murmuring music played ;
In his sea-cradled couch the storm was laid ;
The big, round sun was sinking to his rest,
And of the pillared clouds his brightness made
One vast pavilion in the gorgeous west,
Whence he looked down enthroned, in golden glories drest.

XI.

“Then, stretching forth imploring hands, I asked
For wings to flee to those sequestered isles
Which, in imagination's vision, basked
In the calm radiance of his midnight smiles ;
To tread, alone of men, the mountain-piles
Which there must balance India's hills of snow ;
To track the crystal paths of their defiles, —
Where, glittering white, the moon's pale footsteps go, —
And from their height survey the untrodden world below.

XII.

“ Then overhead the viewless rush of wings,
With soft vibration, smote upon my ear,
And all around ærial murmurings
Filled with their music the bright atmosphere.
I turned, — a white-winged, youthful form stood near ;
Like the mysterious midnight firmament
Were his blue glances, — starlike, deep, and clear ;
With his white plumes his lustrous locks were blent,
And his red lip — like Time — was mutely eloquent.

XIII.

“ His lips unclosed : — ‘ If thou art sure,’ he said,
‘ Thy heart in steadfast courage shall abide,
Then follow me with an unfaltering tread,
Through the deep barriers of yon ocean tide.’
Beneath his wand the wave, from side to side,
Opened before our footsteps, as a gate
Whose noiseless foldings silently divide ;
And to that cavern, chill and intricate,
With one last look at earth, I enter with my mate.

XIV.

“ Onward we pass, through endless emerald arches,
Interminable crystal colonnades,
Where the tall sea-trees, like the mountain-larches,
Droop their still branches in those silent glades ;
Or with the current wave their glossy blades,
As if through woods unrustling winds should blow ;
And there the sea-grass hangs its floating braids,
Clustering on rocks whiter than winter snow,
Or with the drifting tide stands swaying to and fro.

XV.

“Deeper and deeper still, to where is left
The wealth of a drowned universe to sleep,
Where, through each grim and earthquake-rifted cleft,
Unnumbered slimy monsters coil and creep,
Beside tall cliffs, precipitously steep,
Across broad plains of ever-moistened grass,
And where the grisly people of the deep
Strive to break through that cavern’s walls of glass,
And, with great, greedy eyes, glare on us as we pass.

XVI.

“And there, upon the clear convexity
Of ocean, many a fathom overhead,
The white-winged ships, like planets in the sky,
Across the crystal dome their orbits tread.
Though all is still below, fearful and dread
The tempest on those upper waters breaks ;
And, white and cold, the bodies of the dead
Come flickering down, like the thick winter-flakes,
Weltering in dreamless sleep no summer sunshine wakes.

XVII.

“Then we emerged upon the upper air
Led by a massive stairway, broad and white,
Unto a gate, magnificently fair
With opal panellings of shimmering light :
And from a lofty monumental height
Builded beside it, we beheld expand,
As underneath the eagle’s sunward flight,
Regions more regal, provinces more grand
Than where the prophet-prince led Israel’s pilgrim-band.

XVIII.

“I saw the cataract’s breath, exhaled in mist,
Hanging in beauty where the thicket frowned ;
I saw its pillared spray, by sunlight kissed,
Rise, like Earth’s incense, to Heaven’s blue profound.
I heard its solemn footfall thrill the ground
And the firm hills ; and evermore, between
The pausing billows of its mighty sound,
Childhood’s melodious voices filled the scene,
And lowing kine, which fed on upland pastures green.

XIX.

“I could discern, upon the horizon’s rim —
Like clouds which cheat the sailor’s landsick eye —
A brotherhood of mountains, bluey dim,
With snowy summits piercing to the sky :
While nearer, through the green tranquillity
Of grassy plain and forest solitude,
Abounding rivers flowed majestic by,
Bearing the burthens of a nation’s food
To where, beside the sea, the populous cities stood.

XX.

“And underneath my towering pyramid
Came surging on a ghostly caravan,
With sinuous length in desert distance hid ;
Vaster than the vast human streams which ran
Towards hundred-gated Thebes or Ispahan.
Leaving no footprint on the sandy floor,
In shadowy semblances of unborn man,
They beat their soundless palms against the door
And spread their long array on the resounding shore.

XXI.

“To them descending, step by step, we came
Back to the threshold ; and the tumultuous crowd —
With eager, outlined eyes of pallid flame,
And lips that language had not yet endowed —
Around our feet, like rippling grasses, bowed
In expectation. Then my guide, to me
Turning his azure orbs, serenely proud,
Took from his gathered robe a golden key,
Saying, — ‘This glory, mortal ! is vouchsafed to thee.’

XXII.

“And placing thus my hand upon the lock,
Beneath its touch — with such grand minstrelsy
As when the vexed Atlantic smites the rock —
The crashing hinges opened, broad and free,
And Time’s innumerable progeny,
With silent pæans of unuttered song,
Entered ; — and silver-suited Liberty
Foremost, with queenly presence, passed along
As if to her, alone, such empire could belong.

XXIII.

“But, like a wounded eaglet that is driven
Seaward upon the overpowering blast, —
Whose pinions unavailingly have striven,
Held in its clutch relentlessly and fast —
With them a struggling form was hurried past.
The look is still imprinted on my brain
Which her imploring eyeballs backward cast,
As, pointing to her fetters’ bloody stain,
Her dumb lips formed the words, ‘Thou too shalt know this
chain.’

XXIV.

“And I have known it. Lo! the purple scar,
Which has to my defrauded spirit taught
How ruthlessly ingratitude could mar
The hands which unto Spain new empires brought;
Behold the recompense for which I fought
The elements, — the stern remembrancer
What guerdon benefits, once past, have bought;
And he, who ages hence my dust shall stir,
Shall find these fetters mouldering in my sepulchre.

XXV.

“And now farewell, my comrade! thou hast been
With me in manhood’s hopefulness and trust;
Thou hast beheld my laurels thick and green,
And thou hast seen them crumble into dust;
Thou hast experienced the change which must
O’ercloud ambition’s most successful dream;
Thou know’st how brightest steel will yield to rust,
And how the mountain-summits coldly gleam,
Which from the distant vale of youth so radiant seem.

XXVI.

“Thou know’st that it is well. It is the earth
Which fades from us, — not we who fade from it;
It matters not the record of our birth
Should be on its green page no longer writ;
We’re not identical; — the soul is lit
At fires which shall outlive the sun; and we,
How strong soe’er to earth our hearts were knit,
Would not its life should follow us, but be
To other souls a stepping-stone, — a legacy.

XXVII.

“And what availeth Fame’s heraldic list?
For him who sees eternity begun,
Her airy glories fade as morning’s mist
Melts in the rounded presence of the sun.
The faithful servant when his work is done
And Twilight shadows the empurpled skies,
Counts not the wages worldliness hath won,
But usances which in celestial eyes
Repay God’s golden loan of opportunities.

XXVIII.

“Henceforward the vicissitudes of Fate
And Life’s uncertainties for me are o’er ;
Lo! The white-handed seraphim who wait, —
Farewell, dear friend, — at Death’s half-opened door!
Beyond its silver threshold, nevermore
Shall sorrow cumber their world-weary guest ;
Beneath the palms of that immortal shore
Stand Love and Faith, and beckon me to rest —
Folded as his tired child — upon the Father’s breast.”

XXIX.

And thus he passed ; yet, with those very chains .
Suspended by his solitary bed,
Happier than when he trod youth’s verdant plains,
And saw Hope’s radiant halo overhead.
What though each fickle, earthly hope was dead,
And their ghosts haunted memory’s moonlight ray?
With the enfranchised spirit’s gaze he read
Heaven’s fiery chart, and trod its starry way,
As erst across the deep he tracked the westering day.

XXX.

Faith in his heart and on his lip, he died !
Happier, thrice happier, than the monarch's throne,
With myriads kneeling to its despot pride,
Is the poor couch, untended and alone,
Where that brief word hath breathed its steadfast tone ;
The martyr's stake, the patriot's dungeon-gloom,
It makes irradiate, and sorrow's moan
Bursts into rapture as its beams illume
The undiscovered land beyond the portal-tomb.

XXXI.

With two such souls to beckon, shalt thou not,
Francisco, tread sustained the flinty road
Where one brief moment, ever unforgot,
Life's blossoming path with barren thistles sowed ?
O, yes ! from memory's bitter fountain flowed
Sweet waters of repentance ; and Remorse —
A haggard dam — a blooming child bestowed.
Step after step he climbed his upward course,
Till on the peak he stood, — strengthened to sinewy force.

XXXII.

He quitted Spain once more ; he turned his feet
Back to those desecrated ocean-isles ;
And there the hapless Indian learned to greet
His pitying gaze with thankfulness and smiles ;
With many a deed of mercy he beguiles
His solitude ; till, in a mountain-cave,
He pointed out — hid in the wood's lone aisles —
His tomb ; and when his form to earth they gave,
One was already there ; — it was Mahala's grave !

EPILOGUE.



*THUS is it ended. — Farewell patient eyes
Who still have followed onward, page by page,
From dawning Youth to Twilight's mysteries,
This Drama of Life's pictured pilgrimage.
I cannot claim the noble heritage
Of monarch-poets who have left behind
Words, like live coals of Thought, that fire the Age;
Or pearls, which scattered on Time's beach, we find
Where from its tidal breadth hath ebb'd the ocean-mind.*

*But what I had I gave; — nor all in vain,
Perchance, may be the offering thus bestowed.
The outlined effigies of Joy or Pain, —
However feebly has their colouring glow'd —
Even the school-boy's etchings, where his road
Across the drifted snow or sands hath pass'd, —
Recall to us some earlier episode
Of hope or admonition, fading fast; —
Some idol, crushed by Time the great iconoclast.*

*And lacking even such claim — I fain would be
With friends who through the sultry summer-space
Linger beside the blue immensity,
Sheltered within some Nereid's dwelling-place ;
Or where the whispering pine-boughs interlace,
And the ferns grow, and rivulets rejoice ;
Or in the loitering skiff, which adds its grace
To the still lake ; — so mine might be their choice
Of rhyme to which to lend the melody of voice.*

*And still more welcome were it, could I prove —
In the enforced leisure of my days —
Worthier, by this, the love of those I love ;
Comrades whose mere companionship were praise, —
Who with unspotted fingers pluck the bays
Which are the meed of Action — who the calls
Of Duty follow, though the fagot blaze.
To such I dedicate my mimic walls ; —
“ Plaudite et valete ; ” — so the curtain falls.*

OUR FLAG.

OUR FLAG.



I.

OUR country's Flag! our country's Flag!
How gloriously it greets the eye,
Floating from mast and mountain-crag
Among the rafters of the sky!
What memories for the breast that owns
One fibre of the common heart;
What whispered warnings in the tones
Which from its blazoned bunting start!

II.

It is the charter Freedom gave
When here she brought her royal whelp
Across the solitary wave,
Nurtured by naught but Nature's help:
And now, within his western lair
To fearless, sinewy vigour grown,
What miscreant enemy might dare
To hunt the lordly quarry down!

III.

Follow its track across the seas
Northward, till midnight kisses morn ;
Fling it abroad upon the breeze
Beneath the burning Zodiac born ;
And while its sheltering folds expand
Above thee, — sleep ! devoid of fear :
It is the symbol of a land
Which balances a hemisphere.

IV.

Upon the battle-trampled ground
Lay scattered every starry gem,
Until by Glory they were bound
In one imperial diadem ;
And Valour planted it on high ;
A constellation overhead, —
Our morning-star when Day is nigh,
And radiant still in Evening's red.

V.

Who dared to think our stately oak,
Teeming in every pregnant bough,
Unscathed by foes' or lightning's stroke,
Could crumble in its greenness now ?
That we, divorced by factious wiles,
Could crawl from nations' door to door —
Scorned by their diplomatic smiles —
And beg the bread we gave before ?

VI.

Let Virtue consecrate the soil
Where Liberty hath sown the seed,
And never shall it be the spoil
Of the disloyal thought or deed.
The lofty mind — the unsullied soul —
Hand linked in hand's fraternal grasp —
Shall in themselves ensphere the whole
Which the embracing oceans clasp.

VII.

Oh, shadows of the immortal van
Which first beneath our banner trod !
If ever help should fail in man
Kneel for us at the throne of God.
Pray that the birthright of your blood
Be bartered by no alien son ;
Or send the earthquake and the flood,
And let us ! let us fall as one.

VIII.

But fear it not ! At Freedom's call
Like ye — your living children rise ;
And stand as an embattled wall
Around the altar where it flies.
There Youth shall read Heaven's promise writ
On every unpolluted fold,
And Age in peaceful honour sit
Until the centuries are old.

IN MEMORIAM.

DANIEL WEBSTER.



SCARCE through the vaulted caverns of the West
Has died a people's tributary sigh ;
And now New England's granite-girdled breast
Thrills with the utterance of her funeral cry ;
And slow and sad the cannon's iron lips
Proclaim the gloom of unforetold eclipse.

Death's giant shadow thrown among the stars,
Upon Jove's broad, refulgent orb is bent ;
It passed beyond the crimson disc of Mars
To quench the whitest of the firmament ;
A voice is mute, whose calm, deliberate word
Fell more resistless than the warrior's sword.

In the hushed city — on the listening hills —
That requiem mingles with our Sabbath prayer ;
Most fitly — else our sense of coming ills
Had worn the unlustrous garment of despair ;
Forgetting Him whose promises abide,
Though human champions fall on every side.

Most fit are hour and time — the autumnal leaf
Trails like a drooping banner, half-mast high ;
And Nature spreads her veil of gorgeous grief
Around the precincts where his ashes lie,
And comes, arrayed in her most regal charms,
To take those kingly relics to her arms.

And it seems meet that when the closing week
Had laid aside its load of toil and woe, —
In kindred peacefulness, that soul should seek
The Power which sent its embassy below ;
And that its second mystery should begin
While the full year's ripe fruits are gathered in.

And well ye chant — ye cannon-tongues of flame !
Your solemn dirges to the sister hill,
Whose answering echoes syllable his name
Where his own accents almost linger still ;
And, like a right arm lifted to the sky,
Yon shaft takes oath his memory shall not die.

Die? It is true that giving dust to dust
We pile the turf above that massive brow,
But in the bosoms of the wise and just
His deathless image hath its dwelling now —
And in all hearts whose sympathies have spanned,
Like his, the horizon of our mutual land.

Earth is serene in sorrow — doubt and fear
 Environ manhood — lo ! the beacon-rock
Is dark, where, ever luminously clear,
 His spirit shone above the billows' shock :
No single Titan now upholds the State,
The feebler many share its tottering weight.

Roll on, O Sun ! Thy chariot leaves behind
 Upon the broad convexity of Earth,
In the world's councils not a mightier mind,
 No soul more gentle by the poor man's hearth.
Pause thou, O Death ! insatiate as thou art !
Thy spoil to-day hath been a nation's heart.

ULTIMUM VALE.



BRAVE, 'mid the brave he fell —
Bravely ;— and now the end.
Hail to thee and farewell !
Son, soldier, comrade, friend !

Stern welcome Death the King
Gave to his realm's repose ;
Stern hands and bosoms bring
Chaplets of bay and rose.

Stern — with a patriot grief,
Strong, even-pulsing, dumb ;
Clad in serene belief
That yet God's peace shall come.

Then shall thy thought stand near,
Hallowing all Peace hath given —
All that pure souls hold dear —
Truth, Justice, Home and Heaven.

Honours, in thy young dreams,
Seemed beacons duskier bright,
Than Faith and Love, whose beams
Fill the heart's halls with light.

And spirits such in mould,
When flowers with dews are wet,
Like lamps of purest gold
In Memory's heaven are set.

Brave, 'mid the brave he fell ;—
Life's battle bravely won.
Hail to thee and farewell !
Friend, soldier, comrade, son !

HYMN OF BEREAVEMENT.



IN hidden wisdom, Father ! God !
 Bid'st thou thine earthly servants grieve ;
Oh ! grant us strength to kiss the rod
 Which scourgeth all thou would'st receive.

Our lily, which began to spread
 Its virgin petals to our eyes,
Hath meekly bowed its gentle head,
 And thou hast plucked it for the skies.

But though around our darling's brow
 Hopes clustered as the flowers of May,
Which, like autumnal foliage, now
 Lie sere and withering in our way, —

Oh ! bid our thoughts no longer cling
 To earth, in selfishness and gloom,
But mount on faith's unfettered wing
 With the freed spirit from the tomb.

We thanked thee in our hours of mirth,
Teach us that thou art loving still ;
That there 's no holier joy on earth
Than grief, submissive to thy will.

Subdue our heart's rebellious strife,
Quicken our souls with heavenly breath,
That though we weep for death in life,
We mourn not those who live in death.

Death is no messenger of wrath :
As planets hold their watch at even,
Love when it quits our darkened path
Kindleth its beacon-fires in Heaven.

A W R E A T H.



At close of day,
With blooms of summer heaped above his brow, —
Himself a blossom sweet and pure as they, —
He slumbers now.

As light departs,
From groves with glistening tears of dew impearled
We turn, with faltering feet and heavy hearts,
Back to the world.

Back to our home,
Across the threshold of whose darkened door
The music of his footstep, through the gloom,
Shall ring no more.

His morning smile
Was joyous as the all-pervading sun ;
Nor faded its sweet influence all the while
Till day was done.

Then, like a bird
Awaiting the next day-dawn till it sings,
His image in our bosoms slept unstirred,
With folded wings.

But He who took
A brother from among the Apostles' band,
Beckoned our darling with a brother's look,
A brother's hand.

And while, distressed,
Affection lingers round his lonely sleep,
He evermore hath still a Father's breast
Whereon to weep,

For from those eyes
Which ever were compassionate for all,
If even in heaven he hear our yearning sighs,
Some drops must fall.

But in God's years,
Shall friends and kindred, in celestial day,
Stand face to face ;— and then, at length, shall tears
Be wiped away.

THE EARLY DEAD.



WELL spoke the sage of Israel's time,
"Thou know'st not, groping child of clay,
From the glad promise of its prime,
The offspring of the briefest day."

A day? The lightest-footed hour
Guides not so true Apollo's steeds,
But, 'neath each fiery hoof, some flower
Is crushed, — some trodden spirit bleeds.

We build with years of toil and care
The fabric of our manhood's home,
And the winged lightning shatters there
The very keystone of the dome.

We mould a goblet, and we dip
From pleasure's well her waters sweet ;
Then, as we raise it to our lip,
Lo ! it lies shivered at our feet.

We praise some freshly-budding plant
Whose odorous breath perfumes the gale ;
When, to belie our prideful vaunt,
Behold it ! scentless, shrunk and pale.

We are as travellers who would climb
Some traitor track of Alpine snow,
Which, in the sunniest summer time,
Hides the unfathomed gulf below.

A darkness shrouds our journeying band —
We feel the treacherous footing glide —
Our comrade's pressure quits our hand —
We turn — he's missing from our side.

'T was thus with thee whom we deplore ;
Thy youth was like the sapling oak ;
The rose — the vase — the faithless shore,
Its brief fragility have spoke.

Pass on. The happy find their sphere
Beneath a brighter, bluer sky,
Upon a flowerier sod, than here
Above, around our pathway lie.

Grief clings to earth ; the bird of night
Moans in the forest chill and dark ;
But when the day springs clear and bright
Soareth aloft the joyous lark.

Leave us then here upon the earth
To wait the mists and shades of even,
And be, in youthfulness and mirth,
Our morning-messenger to Heaven.

“S U D D E N L Y.”



LITTLE by little morning's earliest ray
Grows to the quickening, universal glow,
Which, from the fountain of the perfect day,
Fills every golden bowl of life below.

Little by little, when the day is done,
O'er eyelids wearied by the summer glare,
Spread the dim wings of night — and one by one,
The slow-paced planets climb heaven's sapphire stair.

Thus of man's being day to day is wed,
Like pearl to pearl, symmetrical and round :
And thus its gifts, pearl after pearl, are shed
From the completed circlet, to the ground.

So thy young life was rounding to its prime,
Graceful and gradual, with a tidal scope ;—
Its outer ripple fell with silvery chime,
Already, near the waiting feet of Hope.

And of great galleons, freighted to the brim,
She — looking seaward with expectant eyes —
Up from beyond the far horizon's rim
Already saw the filmy topmasts rise.

But ah ! That tide shall never reach its height ;
Those stately vessels never hail the shore :
Before the voice could form the words, “ ’tis night,”
Darkness came down — the vision is no more.

Oh ! sudden night ! Oh ! weary, weary pang !
None of those parting memories sad and brief,
Around which Love with clinging arms might hang,
And sob itself to slumber and relief.

No clasp of hands — no mutual sigh for sigh —
No flickering smile before the soul is past —
No look to tell us from the closing eye
That what we love has loved us to the last.

Our startled hearts half disbelieve in death
For those round limbs, — that lip with life's perfume ;
They half believe we might with yearning breath
The just extinguished taper reillumine.

Yet thought hath still for us the gracious boon
That, loving, pure, and joyous as the day,
Thy tender graces, hid ere manhood's noon,
Shall know not alienation or decay.

Though of the moon, behind the twilight hill,
To man a silver thread alone appear,
For God she waxes not nor wanes, and still
Turns to the sun a perfect, full-orbed sphere.

And though the visible for us may die,
Though the receding ocean leave the shell,
Faith's listening ear can catch the murmured sigh —
“Love on, dear hearts ! The dead can love as well.”

DESPONDENCY.



ANOTHER star from out the sky !
Another hearth-fire cold and dim !
Another fountain mute and dry !
Again ! again the funeral hymn !

Another Summer's latest light
Glowing in Autumn's crimson leaf !
So strangely, beautifully bright —
Yet but the livery of our grief.

But wherefore — wherefore grudge the tear ?
Joy to no sturdier life is born —
Beside the death-bed of the year
The rose must perish with the thorn.

Then onward ! onward, stricken soul !
Though clinging sorrow falter slow.
On ! till ye reach the Seasons' goal
And Winter's winding-sheet of snow.

NARRATIVE, LYRICAL,
AND
CONTEMPLATIVE.

NANCY'S BROOK.



WE have not within our borders,
Like the Old World, many a spot
Where old names are as recorders,
Lest its legends be forgot.

'T is a pity — for the spirit
Loves its kind in joy and pain ;
And to think it shall inherit
Sympathy itself again.

And where human joys or sorrows
Haunt the valley or the lake,
Nature, from tradition, borrows
Two-fold graces, for their sake.

So, upon my mountain travel,
While beside their porch I bask,
For such hoards of Love or Marvel
Of the farmers' wives I ask.

Not for tales of feudal glory,
 Knightly deeds, or magic book,
But like hers whose simple story
 Gave the name to Nancy's Brook.

She had followed her seducer
 From the country near the sea,
As she might have followed you, Sir,
 Had you spoken fair as he.

And she had no home nor kindred
 In the city by the bay ;
None of those who might have hinderèd
 When she went with him away.

So they journeyed on together,
 With the jocund hunter-train,
In the pleasant April weather,
 Through the sunshine and the rain.

Journeyed northward by the river,
 Till its cradle-song was heard,
Where the sheltering pine-leaves quiver,
 In the upland breezes stirred.

Northward through the rocky passes,
 Dark, and difficult, and steep ;
Through — to where the meadow-grasses
 In the summer stillness sleep.

Where the cloud-crowned mountain towers,
Proud and king-like, over them ;
And the timid tribes of flowers
Come and kiss his garment's hem.

There their sylvan lodge was builded,
Roofed with white-and-yellow bark ;
And its life the landscape gilded
From the dawning till the dark.

And she lived there, unreminded
About innocence or crime ;
To the wintry future blinded,
Like the birds in pairing-time.

Hers was no romantic passion,
Nurtured by poetic lore ;
'T was Affection's homeliest fashion —
Love and serve — and nothing more.

No thought took she for the morrow,
Nor for any thing beyond,
But to meet his frown with sorrow,
And to smile when he was fond.

So the summer days went past her,
Till the yellow golden-rod
And the purple-flowering aster
Carpeted the verdant sod.

And the squirrel in the branches,
Gnawing at the ripened nut —
Sitting, poised upon his haunches —
Dropped the shells upon the hut.

And along the forest arches
Purple grapes began to shine,
High among the feathery larches,
Like great, glistening drops of wine.

Then the band began to scatter,
Few by few, till all were gone ;
But she thought it little matter
That they two were left alone.

But, alas ! what rotten-hearted
Creatures mask themselves as men !
He, that seemed a man, departed,
And she saw him not again.

Long she watched and long she waited —
On the lonely threshold stood —
Hoping he was but belated
Somewhere in the distant wood.

While the chill night-wind was blowing,
Listened if his footsteps came ;
Kept the embers bright and glowing,
So that she might cook his game.

Then her hope grew daily colder,
Unperceived, within her mind ;
As the kernel oft will moulder,
Leaving but the brittle rind.

And she sat, with forehead shaded,
Stony with unspoken grief —
Neighbourless, alone, unaided —
Till the falling of the leaf.

And the bag of meal grew lighter
Day by day, and crumb by crumb ;
While dim visions would affright her
Of the winter snows to come.

In her bosom her heart sickened,
With its dumb and sullen strife ;
But, within its gloom, there quickened
Still the yearning after life.

Memory moulded o'er the faces
Which upon her childhood smiled ;
Painted the familiar places,
Far to southward, through the wild.

Then, when agony was sorest —
Pausing, lingering, looking back —
On she started, through the forest,
Following the hunters' track.

Oh, the days were very dreary,
As she struggled on forlorn ;
Or, in darkness, cold and weary,
Waited for another morn.

Struggled upward, to the hollow
Where the rifted granite blocks
Left a pathway she could follow,
With the deer, between the rocks.

Clambered down, along the masses
Of those broad, colossal shelves,
Where the bear-cubs, as she passes,
Think her savage as themselves.

Walked beneath the soaring ledges
Where the trees climb dwindling up ;
And streams, sparkling from their edges,
Overfill each pebbly cup ;

Or, with many braided crinkles,
Like a crown of silver hair,
Fall above the hoary wrinkles
Of some boulder, bald and bare.

Crept through tough and tangled savin,
Underneath the hemlock eaves,
Which o'erhang the sombre ravine
With a thatch of glossy leaves.

Then the streamlet, glad and gushing,
Through the broader valley marched,
With united phalanx rushing,
By the blue sky overarched.

And along the banks she wandered
With uncertain, tottering tread ;
All this wealth of Nature squandered
On her lorn, dishevelled head.

Naught to her the burning splendour
Of the forest's funeral blaze ;
Nor the distance, faint and tender,
Through the purple autumn-haze.

As she passed, the partridge, whirring,
Shot from out the ferny brake ;
Or, among the leaves, unstirring,
Watchful, lay the bright-eyed snake.

And the life of those glad creatures,
'Mid Earth's grand and silent grace,
Made her eager, haggard features
Seem a blot on Nature's face.

So she slowly onward faltered,
Wan with abstinence and pain,
Till the river's course was altered,
Turning eastward to the plain.

There a stream her pathway crosses,
Now a barrier, broad and wild ;
Though in summer, through the mosses,
It would murmur like a child.

And beyond its dizzy whirling,
At the bottom of the glen,
Is the blue smoke upward curling —
Is the fellowship of men.

But her pilgrimage was over —
Hopeless sank she on the brink,
Thinking of her cruel lover,
And of God she tried to think.

With her senses feebly reeling,
Had a vision, vague and dim,
How, beside her mother, kneeling,
Once she used to pray to Him.

There she lay — her forehead turning
Southward, where the farm-fires burned,
Till her spirit, bruised and yearning,
To its Giver had returned.

Lay with falling leaves around her —
And the kindly country-folk,
Near the stream by which they found her,
Buried her beneath an oak.

'T is, you 'll say, a simple story ;
And the theme for poet's art
Should be some old, sculptured glory,
Not the fragment of a heart.

But such legendary riches
As our hunting-grounds possess,
Better fit their forest niches —
Archives of the wilderness.

And the surges of the city
Overwhelm a thousand pleas
Heard with brimming eyes of pity
Amid solitudes like these.

STANZAS

WRITTEN AFTER THE DEPARTURE OF AN ATLANTIC STEAMER.



WITH what unconsciously majestic grace,
Like a leviathan half roused from sleep,
Thou movest from thy land-locked trysting-place,
To cleave thy way across the convex deep ;
While Ocean shouts to thee his welcome wild,
And clasps thee in fierce joy, — his fearless child !

Thy mighty pulses play, — thy soul of fire
Paints its black breathings on the cold, blue sky,
And, scoffing at the billows' puny ire, —
As paws the war-horse at the trumpet's cry, —
Thou pantest for a struggle with their wrath,
Trampling thy onward course along their path.

Confided wealth to thee were nothingness, —
Bucephalus weighed not his rider's gold, —
But couldst thou of thy nobler freightage guess,
The bruised and loving soul thine arms enfold,
A mother's yearning tenderness thou 'dst feel,
Thou iron-hearted thing with ribs of steel !

That sorrowing soul ! How many a fitful phase
Of life hath read its teachings to her eye,
Since, cradled in the shade of Shakspeare's bays,
She heard the Muses' whispered lullaby
Who with the sister Graces did combine,
Their flowers in Fate's dark web to intertwine !

How many a heart hath hung upon her words !
Wit, Art, and Wisdom at her shrine have knelt,
And on the trembling soul's awakened chords
The varying melodies of passion felt ;
For, in Love's school by Truth and Beauty taught,
That voice embodied all the charms of thought.

All lovely fancies of the poet's brain,
Which from imagination's rifled hoards he stole,
Sprang from the page, informed with life again,
To claim their empire o'er the loyal soul ;
And Genius led that visionary band
To take fresh chaplets from his darling's hand.

There stood sad Constance, — for her murdered boy
Invoking vengeance, with white, outstretched arms ;
And sprightly Beatrice, so proudly coy,
Yet melted at the mischief of her charms ;
With Henry's wronged, repudiated mate,
Most queenlike still in her despised estate.

Gentle Ophelia came with willow crown,
Her dark, dishevelled tresses dripping wet ;
And wilful Kate, who wins us with a frown,
Whose temper shall be tamed to sweetness yet.
There was Cordelia's filial love, and then
The tender truthfulness of Imogen.

Lo ! through Verona's perfumed orchard-shades,
A girlish vision forms upon the sight,
Which, in those dim, ancestral colonnades,
With starlike beauty makes the darkness bright,
And kneels to her by Fate foredoomed to know
All depths of guiltless tenderness and woe.

Time gives and takes, — wayward alike in all ;
He bears two goblets in his trembling hands,
And where, from one, bright drops of nectar fall,
Verdure and blossoms clothe life's barren sands ;
And the old graybeard looketh back to smile,
As if amid those bowers he 'd pause awhile.

And moments come, when quivering lips must drain
That other goblet's bitter contents dry,
One draught, for years of concentrated pain, —
While his broad pinions stain the azure sky,
And their black shadows on the dewless sod
Hide from our haggard eyes the face of God.

It is that hour for her ; — upon the bleak,
Cold deck she stands, a monument of woe,
While on her speaking brow and bloodless cheek
Thought's struggling forms their changeful outlines throw ;
As when, depicted on a marble wall,
Some hidden wrestlers' writhing shadows fall.

Soothe thou thy savageness, thou surly sea !
And, as upon a mother's throbbing breast,
With lion-hearted magnanimity,
Rock her to slumber, — she hath need of rest.
Chain the fierce tempest many a fathom deep,
Down at earth's core, where his pale victims sleep.

That vision fades upon the straining view ;
Bear her on gently, O thou gallant bark !
And may the dolphins' rainbow-tints imbue,
Like emblemed Hope, the billows cold and dark ;
Till, to thy port by inward impulse driven,
Thy rest shall symbolize the soul's in heaven.

SUMMER MUSINGS.



Lo, Summer's verdure ! Let me quit awhile
The city's teeming labyrinth, and seek
The sympathizing gaze of Nature, who,
Like a fond mother, smiled upon my youth,
And claims the love and reverence of my prime.
The spirit craves at times to leave the place
Where all life's attributes are ends or means
Of toiling commerce, and to fold her wings
Where Earth, unstinting, lavishes the gifts
Which reproductive human handicraft
But feebly emulates.

How tenderly
Contrasteth Nature's gentle kiss of peace
With the hot lip of Pleasure ! and the soul,
That, like a pilgrim, through the weary world
Beareth her pack of cares and vanities, —
How gladly lays she it aside awhile,
To snatch a respite from her weariness !

Amid the dazzling pageantry of joy,
Where glad eyes flash, and laughter welcomes wit.

And pulses beat in cadenced unison
To music's tones, and in the eddying dance
Fair shapes of mirrored gracefulness float by, —
There flattering crowds acknowledge Beauty's sway,
As queen of Mirth's bewildering carnival.
But when delight's inconstant phantoms fade,
The heart disclaims the transitory joys
Which charm the senses, to defraud the soul.
Then, in imagination's pensive hour,
Nature invites the maiden's lonely steps ;
Here Earth's glad spirits are her ministers,
And from her queenly throat lithe zephyrs lift
The clinging mantle of her showering locks,
And count each ringlet of their shining store.
With Fancy's train around, she makes her throne
The far-o'erlooking hill-top, at whose base
The various landscape, stretching hazily,
Smiles, — as a royal infant through his veil
Of silvery gauze ; — or under whispering elms
She lies unthoughtfully, where, dallying
With the west wind, love flickers round her cheek,
And her fresh, virgin lips incarnadines.
The year's glad children greet their playmate-guest ;
Spring's girlish fingers twine around her brow
Soft coronals of heaven-eyed violets ;
Young spendthrift Summer, like a wooing prince,
Flings at her feet his rich inheritance ;
Or Autumn weaves, to deck her fragrant bower,
His gorgeous tapestries of glowing leaves —
The parting seasons' festal draperies, —
Amid whose flakes the arrowy sunbeams glance,

As when, through blazoned minster-panes, they court
The cloistered charms of some chaste votaress.
No sickly perfumes dull the sated sense,
But sea and land breathe kindred healthfulness,
And all sweet buds their prayerlike incense blend
With aromatic breath of odorous pine ;
While, in creation's psalm of gratefulness,
Earth's tongues are still earth's joys' interpreters,
And speak in music most articulate.
Though harp and flute breathe forth no measured strain,
Ocean's deep organ-pipe, and shrill accord
Of bird and bee, rise up harmonious,
Bearing high aspirations, which no string
To human hand responsive, can awake.

Who hath not felt how nature's loveliness
Reflects, through every shade of fantasy,
The varying, viewless features of the soul ?
To childhood's guilelessness the singing brook,
The breeze, the sunshine, are as playfellows ;
And with the choral thunders of the storm,
When the red bolt darts hissing to the wave,
Passion's wild voices shout in harmony.
As from Egeria's fount, the Delphic hill,
Or old Dodona's vocal solitudes,
Ruler and prophet sought their oracles,
Earth still, in cave or solitary wood,
Inspires her votary. Her mountains are
Thought's giant pedestals, by which the soul
Climbs, Titanlike, to God. The horizon's verge
Provokes the spirit's wings to heavenward flight,

Where her rapt vision meets those angel-eyes
Which sympathize with man's vicissitudes,
And, like a cloud that prophesies the dawn,
Throws back their radiance on the world below.
Her gentle kiss unwrinkles toil's hard brow ;
And to thy shrine, saintlike Simplicity,
When the vexed spirit hungers for repose,
She welcomes us with a maternal smile ;
Not the young mother's whom fond nature's pride
And joy reciprocal o'erpay each pang, —
But hers, to whom, love's dazzling veil stripped off,
Life stands revealed in bleak severity ;
Whose loving, sad intensity would say,
"I've borne thee, precious one, with bitter throes,
To bitter heritage, wherein thy heart
Must travail also with acuter pangs
Than doth the body, till thy chastened soul
In seraph-birth claim seraph-sisterhood,
And every bloody drop of agony
Flashes, prismatic, in the smile of God."
Nature, in every mood, is eloquent ;
And he whose soul toils, slumberless, to solve
The heart's obdurate problem, "What is life?"
May here find time, place, circumstances, fit
For hopeful, heavenly colloquies with thought.

From such communion when the spirit turns
Back to the work-day duties of the world,
She hath each sacred chamber of the soul
Hung with the pictured memories of earth,
And bringeth stores of sweet imaginings
To vivify the barrenness of toil.

To her serener gaze the forms of truth
There once unveiled — as to the Idalian swain
Stood Wisdom, Power, and Love — are manifest,
Like shrouded outlines to the sculptor's eyes,
Even through the lendings of deformity.
But 'mid such dear and manifold delights
Man may but lengthen out a summer-hour ;
He hath a mission to humanity,
Which summons where his fellows congregate,
And, 'mid the confluence of the crowded mart,
Enjoins a loving, thoughtful energy.
And why lament the inevitable lot,
Or take its varied blessings grudgingly ?
'T is action gives vitality to life ;
Nor do the city's brick-bound thoroughfares
Rebuke the awakened spirit's questionings.
Beauty, who scorns the homely guise of toil,
May there reflect, " Within our human hearts,
Which is most human ? " Lone humility
May there, in chastened meekness, learn to tread
Faith's boundless, planet-paved inheritance ;
Science may strain within his pallid grasp
The sinewy fingers of the artisan,
And ask, " What were we, separate ? "
The rich, the wise, the good — Christ's almoners below —
Cast their account with that dread usurer
Who lends to us upon such fearful pledge, —
The soul's beatitude. With human tears
Jesus wept Lazarus ; — and human tears
Are still the priceless anodyne of woe.
On mercy's errand, through the mocking street,
That loving one his blood-stained burden bore ;

We in his holy service there may toil,
The friend of him who to himself is false ;
Or audible, amid the dense abodes
Of sinful, sordid wretchedness, — as erst
Through the lone aisles of the primeval wood, —
May hear reverberate from the shivering soul
Of the first fratricide that thrilling cry, —
“O man ! where is thy brother ? ”

Such appeal

Summons the thoughtful. But how few can claim,
Where cares absorb, and mirth intoxicates,
To look with equal, unimpassioned eye
On men and things around ! What human soul
Shall stand, as gold, that dread alembic's test,
Were hard to guess. In its fierce alchemy,
Thought, Passion, Feeling, mix confusedly,
And generate or balm or poison.

'Mid learning's night, the stumbling graybeard groped
Within the elemental workshop of the world,
In baffled quest of nature's master-key.
But we, who boast the light of reason's ray,
And revelation's mild effulgency,
May track Reflection's footsteps to the dim,
Embowering shades, and find, perchance, with aid
Of whispering shapes which haunt their leafiness,
The philosophic talisman of Truth.

The trembling mariner, whose shattered bark
Swings beaconless within the yawning trough,

Shrinks from the nearing breakers' hungry roar ;
Imagination scarce anticipates
Death's gurgling, icy horrors, when he drifts
Within the lee of some storm-battling cape,
Where the unvexèd waters kiss the shore,
And, hid no more by intervening surge,
Like a fond sister's sympathetic eye,
The beacon smiles across their rippling breast.
And thus calm contemplation still reveals
The light, by human passion-surges hid.

Whoever, then, in the great pilgrimage
Would walk with equal and observant step, —
No laggard from his early comrade's side,
Nor yet swept blindly onward by the throng, —
Doth well, at intervals of toil, to seek
Some comprehensive summit, at whose base
The various chart of being is unrolled,
And from whose verge the jealous barriers
Of prejudice or custom are o'erlooked.
Thence let him trace the final unity
In which life's interwoven pathways terminate
And choose the landmarks which shall guide his course
Amid that labyrinth's perplexity.

Happy the tired child who lays his head
Upon a parent's lap ; — she, all the while,
Encircles him with soft, maternal arms,
And, from lips redolent of happy prayer,
Rains kisses on his brow, and drooping lids,

And fragrant, silken hair. The boy, meanwhile,
Smiles in half-conscious sleep ; his upturned lips
Pout, kissingly, in answer to her own ;
His little hands still feebly print themselves
Upon her snowy bosom ; and his ear
Drinketh, in dreams, her whispered lullaby.
And thus upon the mighty mother's breast
May weary man an hour repose himself.

A GOLDEN WEDDING.



FOR fifty years ! For fifty years !
How seldom can we thus look back
Without a blindness, born of tears,
Hiding from view their broken track :
How seldom does the aftermath
Spread its sweet windrows by the way
Where, in unthoughtful Youth, our path
Was fragrant with the blooms of May.

Oftener when April just awaits,
With expectation in her eyes,
That Summer open wide his gates, —
The drifting mists obscure the skies ;
Or when the virgin Spring would tread
Where clover-fields are red with June, —
From the blue zenith overhead
The rounded sun descends at noon.

Even though the summit still may burn
Towards which our steadfast course is kept,
How oft, in sadness, must we learn
That bridgeless barriers intercept ;

Or in infirmity or grief
Be led across the barren rock
Where thirsting springs refuse relief
And Sorrow tends her stinted flock.

How many a traveller stays to pluck
The flowers which by the wayside bloom,
Until Day's flaunting flag is struck
And Night envelops him in gloom ;
Or, traversing the yellow sands,
Striveth their glittering grains to hold, —
To find within his cheated hands
The worthless tinsel, — not the gold.

But wiser, — thou hast made thy bourn
High objects and enduring things ;
And happier, — knowest not the thorn
Which incomplete achievement brings ;
And having climbed the mountain wall
To where the level uplands lie,
While Evening's pensive shadows fall,
May'st rest in glad tranquillity.

Although Youth's tingling pulse be still
And Autumn leaves be sere around,
'Tis sweet, upon the sunset hill,
To wait the curfew's welcome sound : —
Full fairly is such respite bought
By him who, in the toiling street
Or on the harvest-plains of Thought,
Hath borne the burden and the heat.

And she, who in her maiden pride
Governed thy heart with gentle sway,
Still standeth, faithful, by thy side
Upon this second marriage-day.
What though some earlier charms should flit !
There needs no sorrow nor surprise ; —
Behold her girlish graces writ
● Within her children's children's eyes.

And thus through Being's round we live, —
It were but foolishness to grieve
That Youth and Summer still must give
And Age and Autumn must receive :
Nor will we count it irksome now
That some few flakes of wintry snows
Should, noiseless, fall upon the bough
Whereon the golden fruitage glows.

THE PARTING YEAR.



How beautiful the morn,
This primal Sabbath of the callow year !
To Summer ne'er was born
One that gleamed ruddier or more saffron clear.

· It is as if the sun
From every clime his conquering footsteps pressed,
Had brought the spoils he won,
To lavish on old Winter's icy breast.

·
Like a deserted bride,
The moon veils meekly her unvalued charms ;
· While, flushed with love and pride,
Day, fresh and jocund, leaps from Ocean's arms.

Each stem and branch and spray
Outlined in silver on the tender sky,
Smiles in the faithless ray
Which soon shall drink its crystal glories dry.

To gladness, thus, and youth,
Seems the year's coming path with diamonds hung ;
And around naked truth,
For them the illusive sheen of hope is flung.

But while their joyous march
Pursues the sunlight eagerly and fast,
Some love the rainbow's arch
Which spans the cloudy chambers of the Past.

And for the musing mind,
That from Time's westering pageant turneth back,
Rich memories are enshrined,
In turf or marble, by his last year's track.

In castle and in cot,
Loving and loved have yielded up their breath ;
And, drawn by History's lot,
Great names have swelled the senate-roll of Death.

In her cathedral dim,
Moulders the form of Albion's warrior-chief ;
And with the Atlantic's hymn
Mingles Columbia's requiem of grief.

It is a noble thought —
The vast duration of a mighty fame ;
That words and deeds be taught
In coming tongues which have not yet a name.

As its bright course is run,
Detraction, which would fain obscure its day,
Like the cloud near the sun,
Kindles to glory in its parting ray.

And while such grandeur towers
Like the tall oak of the primeval wood ;
Within our household bowers,
We prize no less the memory of the good.

Beneath the stately tree
Whose sheltering branches broad and heavenward shoot,
We gather gratefully
The violets which cluster round its root.

LINES

SUGGESTED AT THE WHITE MOUNTAINS.



WHAT painter is like Nature? Feebler hand
Had never dared design the mountain band,
That round me lift their pinnacles on high,
Outlined upon the canvas of the sky.
The half-awakened sunbeams are at play
Among their tops ;— those couriers of the day,
Where the piled trees an emerald ladder make,
Leap down, to call to life the sleeping lake.
Pillowed on clouds, the tempest's wayward brood
Fold their wet wings and soothe their surly mood ;
As if nor storm nor passion e'er might rage
Within such peaceful, holy hermitage.
Earth wakes ! but 't is as when a lover lies
With night's sweet visions centred in his eyes.
No footfall stirs the solitude, — the stream
Singeth as though its music were a dream.
All is so tranquil, 't is as day were night,
In her own essence luminously bright,
Wooing us to her solitary side,
Most sweetly serious, as a poet's bride,

Who asketh not the aid of words to tell
The thousand thronging thoughts that with her dwell.
In such a season, — such an hour, — alone,
Far from the city's dreary monotone, —
The heart-engendered, heart-consuming strife, —
The haircloth 'neath the robes of daily life, —
Girt by these solemn mountain-tops, I stand
Awestruck, — as in the hollow of God's hand.

Ye glorious landmarks ! motionless, sublime,
Unchanged amid the changefulness of time !
Titanic immortalities ! — but ye
Do antedate antique mythology.
Of the young world's first beauty ye partook ;
From your hoar woods the ebbing deluge shook ;
Unbarred your granite flood-gates, when the wave
Back to defrauded Earth her greenness gave ;
Heard and responded, when, from Sinai hurled,
God's accents circled round the throbbing world ;
And when insensate Nature's shuddering cry
Told the Redeemer's finished agony,
Ye joined the heavenward voice from all below,
That universal litany of woe.
Ye kept your lonely sentry-watch, while gloom
Wrapped art and science in their living tomb ;
And when that veil of shadowy night was torn,
Uttered your watchword to a world unborn.
Your cloudlike summits met the Northman's eye, —
Half land-sick vision, half reality ; —
On them, when bathed in sunset's parting rays,
Dwelt the last sachem's sad, indignant gaze,

Ere, lingeringly, along his western way
He tracked the rushing pinions of the day.
Your prophet-vision marked life's tide that flowed
Where far Palmyra's thousand temples glowed,
And, ebbing like a sun-dried torrent there,
Left but a skeleton where nations were ;
Then through the hundred gates of Thebes rolled on,
O'er gorgeous Persia, to the Parthenon ;
While but the Pyramids remain to trace
The boundless glories of that nameless race,
And Silence, like blind Sound, doth feel his way
To dull Oblivion's arms of crumbling clay.
Ye saw those gathered waters break in foam
Around the Cæsars' lofty palace-dome,
And leave the blood-stained tide-mark of their fall
High on the Coliseum's empty wall,
Where crownless Empire, unrevered and lone,
Sat, garrulous of all her youth had known,
While round the Alps that spreading current bore
Rome's spoilers on, to crowd the Atlantic shore.
And now that here its billowy voice is heard
Where but the Seasons' steps the stillness stirred,
Ye stand majestic and undismayed,
While at your base its haughty waves are stayed ;
And when that all-o'ersweeping flood hath passed,
Like Autumn's pauseless, melancholy blast,
Or like the eagle's swift, unswerving flight,
On, towards the ever-westering shores of night, —
When the lone traveller sits where myriads trod,
And the fox haunts the desert shrines of God,
And desolation shall again resume

A nation's cradle, dwelling-place, and tomb, —
Ye from earth's change shall lift your steadfast eyes
To heaven's unalterable mysteries,
And then, as now, your thoughtful memories teach
More than the countless harmonies of speech.

Did ye to the great brotherhood belong
That prop the temple-roof of classic song,
Its priests' gigantic spirits here might dwell
Forgetful of fame's fadeless asphodel.
Old Hesiod, in your cloudy tops might see
A temple worthy the Theogony,
And sightless Homer, as your thunders roll,
Had felt your mighty shadows on his soul,
While giant phantoms through the solemn wood
Whispered that here Jove's senate-chambers stood.
The plaintive summer-wind amid the trees
Had seemed the dreamy hum of Virgil's bees ;
Beneath your shades his shepherd-swains had sung,
And in your caves the Cyclops' anvils rung.
Ovid had peopled every echoing grove
With peeping satyrs and fair shapes of love,
And in each vine-bough trailing on the air
Seen some transformèd Nymph's dishevelled hair.
Where the frail flowers your dread abysses fence,
Fearless, as childhood of omnipotence,
Rocked in their bells, had Shakespeare's fairies slept,
And o'er the grass in frolic mazes swept.
In your dim, silent shades had Milton sought
The sacred, sad soliloquies of thought,
And in his stately verse or Spenser's lays

Had been your deathless monument of praise.
 Thou, fairest of the train, in every hour
 Hadst lent the aid of inspiration's power ;
 Either when morning's bridegroom sun hath kissed
 To dewy tears thy veil of snowy mist ;
 When the white, lustrous clouds, like wandering flocks,
 Leave their torn fleeces on the rifted rocks,
 And, as a blushing maiden, thou dost fling
 Back the warm smile of day's awakening ;
 Or when the secrets of thy pictured scroll
 Thou to the noontide splendours dost unroll
 Clearly, — as, by the calm, full-orbèd eye
 Of genius lit, the heart's recesses lie :
 All legible in sunshine, — from the peak
 Where the close-clinging moss-flowers clothe the bleak
 Gray cliffs, and teach in artlessness sublime
 How near to heaven humility can climb ;
 Far down to where, beside the silent glade,
 Stand leafy caverns of profoundest shade,
 The spirit's depths revealing, like the eye
 That lights the brow of sun-burnt Italy.
 Like some enchained queen thou sittest there, —
 Latona's victim, — frozen in despair, —
 Of the glad glories of thy days gone by
 Dreaming, to Autumn's wailing lullaby ;
 While the cloud-shadows, like ghost-children, throw
 Their arms about thee, as thou slumberest so.
 When twilight's purple haze hath deepened now
 And darkly wraps thy heavenward-lifted brow,
 As a veiled priestess dost thou lead the choir,
 In the great dome of planetary fire,

Who, since time's birth, to the unsleeping One
Sing sleeplessly their midnight orison.
In other climes thy loveliness had glowed
Mirrored in thoughts its influence bestowed ;
Lending its inspiration, each fair scene
Were hung with votive wreaths of living green.
But though no bard of olden time hath shed
His genius, as a glory, round thy head ;
None the less dear, each feature hath for me
The tender ties of domesticity.
My infancy was cradled in thy shade,
Beneath thy woods my careless childhood strayed ;
Here have I gathered Summer's earliest rose,
And plunged, undaunted, in December's snows ;
Drank Spring's young breath, and sighed when Autumn's leaf
Taught my fond heart a sadly pleasing grief ;
And now that manhood's steps from thee depart,
I'll bear thy image graven on my heart.
Thou send'st me hence to life's great battle-field,
"With or upon it," writ on Honour's shield ;
If there I gain the athlete's fading crown,
Here will I lay the puny tribute down, —
Unknown, still come with trustful heart to thee,
Who know'st the nothingness of eulogy.
Here through Spring's bowers some answering heart I'd lead,
Their prophecies of summer bloom to read ;
And when love's flowers their fragrant petals shed,
With Autumn's dirges mourn their glories fled.
When Memory in the darkened heart shall grope,
And, shivering, clasp the clay-cold hand of Hope,

I'll twine, 'mid Winter's snows, thy hemlock wreath,
That drinks its greenness from the life beneath.
Thy steadfastness shall lend its strength to me,
Amid a fickle world's inconstancy ;
As over ocean's waste my bark I steer,
Thy rustling pines shall soothe my dreaming ear ;
And must I leave beyond the dreary sea
This garmenture of Earth's mortality,
Hither my parted soul shall turn, to trace
The footprints of its early dwelling-place,
Ere, from earth's stains by faith and sorrow shriven,
Childlike, it lift its claspèd hands to heaven.

NOVEMBER.



LIKE an invading band of armèd men,
Within some peaceful, pastoral retreat,
The winds along the desolated glen
Rush ruthlessly, with sacrilegious feet ;
And Summer's dying smile of love is thrown
On what usurping Winter claimeth for his own.

Stretching his hoary branches to the sky,
The patriarchal oak, in mute despair,
Mourns the sweet vine, that late so lovingly
Clung in consorted, spousal beauty there ;
Who now her pulseless tendrils hath unwound,
And lieth, stiff and stark, upon the frozen ground.

The rose hath yielded up her scented breath, —
The lily, like a virgin martyr, died ;
And timorous flower-buds, smitten unto death,
Lie in pale innocence, — while side by side
The violated trees do sobbing stand ;
And, like a funeral pall, gray mists enshroud the land.

Come from the convent-cloisters of the soul,
Ye white-stoled, nun-like thoughts, that watch and pray ;
Whose hands the passing-bell of passion toll,
Hid from the full-eyed gaze of gorgeous day !
Chant ye your choral dirges, sad and fond,
And let the answering heart's analogies respond !

How like is life to life, — Nature to man !
How doth each changeful aspect of the year,
Since first the seasons' circling course began,
Image to him his journeying footsteps here, —
Through Summer's pleasant pathways hurrying fast,
To come to Winter's trackless, dreary snows, at last !

Was it for this that I to Nature's haunts,
As Numa to Egeria's cavern, stole,
Trusting to her to feed the spirit's wants,
In the uncared-for winter of the soul ?
Lo ! Fancy's fruitless flowerets strew the road,
Where Faith and Reason stagger with their leaden load.

O perjured Hope ! thou through Spring's early bowers,
With the sweet sister senses' youthful band,
Didst lead me, all-engarlanded with flowers ;
Thy gentle breath my dreaming slumbers fanned ;
And when, as Adam to his angel bride,
I woke, thy cherub face was pillowed at my side.

Was it for this thou temptedst me to sail

Where Youth's gay squadrons skim the summer seas,
And e'en the tempest falls in diamond hail,

Stirring the tide to silver symphonies, —
That now, on Manhood's shore, lonely and dark,
Should lie the blackening wreck of pleasure's stranded bark?

Vainly, alas! Imagination thought

A fair, imperishable dome to build,
And uncreated shapes of beauty brought,

Till marble grace each marble chamber filled!
What boots it in the solitary breast
To have a palace-heart that knoweth not a guest?

It were less hard to die, than thus, alone,

To hear life's wintry, wailing winds around; —
But thankless, empty hands before God's throne

To raise, — his talent buried in the ground!
That thought must write grief's mortgage on this clay,
All joys of bankrupt Earth were powerless to pay.

Oh, the mind prays for offspring, like the heart!

It hath a craving appetite for fame, —
That in another's breast its image start,

And bend in filial homage at its name;
But thought that knows not action knows not seed;
'T is kingly deeds alone beget a kingly breed.

Take, then, thy standard, though it be the cross, —
Take for thy motto, Holy, Human Love ;
And where in combat Truth's white plume doth toss,
Like loyal champion, to her rescue move.
Through the dark ranks of Selfishness and Hate
Fight on, — and fearless fling the gauntlet down to Fate.

MATER DOLOROSA.



WATCHING, through midnight's mystic loneliness,
Beside the couch some cherished form doth press,
The smile whose waking light diffusive shone
Seems in concentrated sweetness all our own.
Thus by thy side, my daughter, as I stand
With Love and twin-born Sadness hand in hand, —
Those jealous misers who unlock their store
To count by night its hoarded treasures o'er, —
Their low, ærial voices speak to me
In tones of melancholy revery.
How tenderly entwined in slumber's arms
Thou liest, — with thy host of maiden charms
Circling thee round, like angel guards that keep
Their vigils o'er the helplessness of sleep ;
Thy showering ringlets settled into rest,
Like nestling cherubs, on thy gentle breast ;
Thy lips with music's dreaming numbers fraught,
The tranquil home of unimpassioned thought ;
Thy cheek, where feeling's changeful hues are seen,
Like telltale shadows on the moonlit green ;
And thy fair hands o'er thy white bosom laid,
The bashful heart's pure fantasies to shade !

Oh, as each feature's placid rapture shows
What fairy scenes Hope's promises disclose,
How my fond spirit yearneth to presage
Thy fortunes in life's coming pilgrimage !
Ah ! could my coinèd heart's blood buy for me
One glimpse of thy unveiled futurity !
Alas ! that heart's prophetic sorrows tell
Thy tale of human suffering but too well,
And trace each flinty path thou wilt have trod
Ere thy torn spirit find its rest in God.

Thou pure white dove ! why didst thou come to me
But to announce the ebb of passion's sea, —
That earth's uncovered shores were bleak and drear ?
Thou 'st done thine errand ; — wherefore linger here ?
The fragrant buds on April's painted bough
Blossom and fade unwept for, — why not thou ?
Upon the torturing, arid wastes which lie
Between Youth's hopes and Age's apathy,
Where dewless moons reflect the sultry glare
Of shadeless suns that scorch the noontide air,
How shall thy gasping spirit vainly burn
Once more to these dear privacies to turn, —
Once more to lave thy feverish, throbbing brow
In the cool, gurgling streams around thee now !
How shalt thou mourn thy thoughtless infancy,
Thy bounding steps in girlhood's bowers of glee,
And all the fleeting glories which adorn
The primal hour of Love's delicious morn !
Then the calm tide now circling through thy breast
Shall turn to maddening pulses of unrest ;

And every gentle floweret planted there
Be trodden by the ruthless foot of care.
Then shall sweet memories of household words
Moan like the wailing wind-harp's plaintive chords ;
The fibres of uprooted sympathies
Breathe the torn mandrake's desolating sighs,
While from each quivering, lacerated part
The bloody tears of recollection start.
Then shall affliction's teachings, harshly given,
Shake e'en thy spirit's confidence in Heaven,
And thy fierce wrestlings with despair and woe
Be for the world a gladiatorial show.
Why shouldst thou stay to count life's journeying suns
By added graves of life's belovèd ones ;
Or in the juggling alchemy of fate
Learn how sweet love can turn to bitter hate ?
Why make thy soul a sanctuary for one,
And seek the shrine to find the idol gone ;
Or twine affection's tendrils, but to bless
The poisonous upas-tree of selfishness ?
Oh, ere Youth's angel-visitants depart,
And misery's vulture-talons rend thy heart, —
Before one human passion dare intrude
Within that heart's celestial solitude, —
Better thou choose a bridegroom who shall be
More faithful than an earthly spouse to thee ;
And, as thou layest down thy graceful head,
Spotless and meek, upon thy marriage-bed,
Girt with thy yet unloosened virgin zone,
Death's icy kisses freeze thee into stone !

THE FESTIVAL OF THE LEAVES.



I.

THE soft May showers are past
Which waked the meadows to their tender green ;
The summer blossoms came and faded fast —
Where scented June had been.
And now imperial Autumn's sceptred hand
Touches with glory the transfigured land.

II.

Upon the joyous hills
Her festal multitudes stand crowded high,
As where some city's population fills
Window and Balcony
When, with loud welcoming and clarion strain,
Its armies come, victorious, home again.

III.

Along the river's brim,
The crimson-clad battalions of the trees, —
The billowy strophes of their army-hymn,
Borne on the exultant breeze, —
Move through the valley in majestic march
Under the noontide heaven's triumphal arch.

IV.

And still when Day hath set
For dwellers in the hamlet by the bridge,
In his last beams the ensanguined maples yet
 Shine on the upland ridge ;
And kindled larches flash like bonfire-lights,
From peak to peak, along the blazing heights.

V.

In comradeship like this,
I come — ere Winter violate her charms,
To press on Nature's cheek a farewell kiss,
 Enfold her in my arms,
And her consummate loveliness recall
Ere my queen lies beneath her silver pall.

VI.

Amid the forest glades
I track the Hours of the receding Year,
Along October's curtained colonnades
 Their rustling steps I hear ;
And where the sunshine warms the mountain side
Their lingering shadows still, awhile, abide.

VII.

Beneath the mossy ledge
Which overhangs a bowl of amber-brown,
I watch the streamlet brimming o'er the edge,
 And farther down,
Hear its impatient accents and discern
Its eager strugglings, tangled in the fern.

VIII.

And as I lie reclined
Against some trunk the husbandman has felled,
Old, legendary poems fill my mind,
 And Parables of Eld :
I wander with Orlando through the wood ;
Or muse with Jaques in his solitude.

IX.

The birch on yonder mound —
With leafless, ivory branches glimmering bare —
Its yellow treasures heaped upon the ground,
 Seemeth Godiva fair ;
Standing — white-limbed and naked as at birth,
With all her golden raiment slid to earth.

X.

But costlier far than all —
All noble images from Fancy's sphere ;
Fair shapes descend from Memory's pictured hall —
 Faces my heart holds dear,
Visions of unreturning ones, who stand
Beside me here, and take me by the hand.

XI.

Ye sweet autumnal days !
Is there no spell to call your beauty back,
To re-illumine these divine delays
 Upon your duskier track ?
To wake, at will, your dear delights, which steep
The soul in bliss till the tired senses sleep ?

XII.

Vainly, alas ! I cry ;
Vainly I strive to grasp your garments' hem :
Ye sweep in your empurpled radiance by —
 With coronal and gem —
As earth's un pitying sovereigns men who grieve,
And stretch sad hands for pardon or reprieve.

XIII.

Even as I gaze ye cease.
Your palaces are empty in the land ;
And into ruin crumbleth, piece by piece,
 Your culmination grand :
And the red embers darken on the sod
O'er which, unscathed, your saintlike footsteps trod.

XIV.

Oh ! for some poet-soul !
The subtle fervour of whose honeyèd line
Might crush the hoarded harvest of the whole
 Within one cup divine ;
And all your dim-eyed dreams of joy be quaffed,
When to our lips he held the precious draught !

XV.

So princely Ganymede —
Whose roseate cheek the amorous lashes sweep —
Serving the immortal revellers' thirsty need
 In Jove's Olympian keep,
Pours in star-beaming beakers crystalline
The lusty life-blood of the fruited vine.

XVI.

But be not we as they
Who in the recurrent glow of bud and bloom
See but fruition twin-born with decay ;
And through your golden gloom
Grove on to winter ; aimless — hopeless — blind —
Beasts that but build the ladder of their kind.

XVII.

Dead to the noble thrill,
The rapture of the elemental strife :
The kingly pity — the heroic will,
The brotherhood of Life —
Parted companionships, which live again
Within the orbèd portals of the brain.

XVIII.

Yet were it sweet, perhaps,
To pillow in your arms a weary head ;
And with yon rivulet's unhindered lapse,
Pass to the earlier dead :
And, closing thus our heavy-lidded eyes,
Wake to the glad contentment of the skies.

AN ADIEU.



FAREWELL ! farewell ! The outward bound
Wait but the loitering northern gale,
Which, fettered on its natal ground,
Lifts not, as yet, the loosened sail ;
And, mirrored in a glassy sea,
Our anchored ship swings silently.

The short-lived day fades fast and soon,
And, smilelessly and desolate,
Through leafless trees the abbess moon
Peereth, as through a convent-grate ;
While from its cloister-home afar
Looks palely down each vestal star.

But though to-morrow, bounding free
O'er waves of phosphorescent foam,
Our white-winged wanderer of the sea
Track Summer to her tropic home,
What cares the heart to exile driven
For a green earth, a cloudless heaven ?

Years are not life ; — for many days
Feeling, man knows not that he feels,
Until some sudden lightning-blaze
His darkly slumbering thoughts reveals ;
'T is in pangs dolphin-like and keen
The soul's bright, changeful hues are seen.

As in the lava-city's hoard
Each dumb and clouded portrait stands,
To transient brilliancy restored
When moistened by the pilgrim's hands ;
So, memories half-effaced for years
Shine bright, beneath each flood of tears.

And though such moments shed their light
But as the setting winter sun, —
One fleeting instant warm and bright,
Ere his pale, sickly course is run, —
Even the loneliest life can tell
The might of that brief word, — Farewell.

As if the roused and shivering heart
The resurrection-trumpet heard,
Its sepulchred affections start,
Within their icy cerements stirred ;
And joys and griefs, a mingled train,
Come smiling, sobbing, back again.

And yet the lover to its tone
Clings, like the bee to nectared sweets ;
And Fancy, in his wanderings lone,
The murmured melody repeats,
As if on landsick ear there fell
The silver sound of Sabbath-bell.

So, too, the hero — he whose pen,
Or sword, or voice, hath blessed mankind —
Heareth his welcome back again
In every prayer that loads the wind ;
And knightly thoughts, o'er land and sea,
Keep Truth's crusader company.

But, ah ! for me no thronging feet
Shall come, the laurel wreath to twine ;
Nor do I leave one heart to beat
In changeless unison with mine ;
But, like dead pleasure's hollow knell,
Ring out the words, — Farewell, — farewell.

And thou, O sea ! whose placid brow
Hides thy unfathomed soul's unrest ;
How like this traitor world art thou,
That decks with gems its heaving breast,
And smileth scornfully and cold
Above the wrecks its waters hold !

But, as a single drop of brine
Lost in that earth-encircling main,
Compares this throbbing heart of mine
With the world's sum of joy and pain ;
O fool, to think thy lot should be
Counted in life's immensity !

Yet science tells, each drop of foam,
From the storm-fretted breakers hurled,
Forms for as varied life the home,
As peoples this terraqueous world, —
That love and anger, hope and fear,
Dwell in its tiny crystal sphere.

Thus, in each being's mysteries
More gorgeous treasures lie concealed,
Than to the Eastern stripling's eyes
The lamp's enchanted slave revealed, —
More glorious empires to be won,
Than Alexander trampled on.

Let, then, thy intellect disown
These fetters of external sense,
And over all, save God alone,
Claim its god-gift, — omnipotence ;
Let coward natures cringe to fate,
Be thou, self-trusting, greatly great.

And lo ! the winds from slumber break, —
To sunnier climes we take our way ;
Already in our sparkling wake
The liquid, sea-born lightnings play ;
As troops of stars from upper air
Had left their homes to revel there.

And the blithe waves come forth to meet
The fawnlike footsteps of our bark,
As maidens, with white, blue-veined feet,
Danced around Judah's ransomed Ark ;
And over ocean's crystal lawn
Glimmer the primal tints of dawn.

Take, then, the influence of the time ;
Crave not man's fickle sympathy ;
But let thy answering spirits chime
With the glad voices of the sea ;
One thought to grief, — one look behind ;
Now on ! uncaring as the wind.

THE OLD PATH.



I STAND again upon the bridge,
I watch the shimmering stream below,
I hear the pine-trees from the ridge
Repeat the music of its flow.
Lulled by their low, perpetual psalm,
The listening waters lingering sweep
Through meadows filled with drowsy calm —
A dream that glorifies their sleep.

The eastern mountain's dewy shade
Still floats upon the field of grain,
Along whose edge my footsteps made
Their morning pathway to the train ;
The eagle-eyed autumnal flowers
Guard, as of old, the rustic arch
Where the procession of the hours
Moved by us in melodious march ;

And red leaves through the sunset wood
Still flicker down — like tongues of flame,
Just as around her where she stood
To greet me when I homeward came.
But there 's no pressure on my arm,
No voice upon the evening air,
The path has lost its ancient charm —
It leads not home — she sleeps elsewhere.

SUNDAY ON MOUNT HOLYOKE.



I 'VE climbed, with slippery, toiling feet,
The cliff, beneath whose verge,
Far down, wide-waving woodlands beat
Their greenly rippling surge.

With rustling skirts the zephyr treads
The undulating trees,
And azure harebells nod their heads,
Rung by the passing breeze.

'Mid fields of variegated grain
The river lies asleep,
While the stern mountains to the plain
With softened outline sweep.

And, hand in hand, around the vale,
Clad in blue autumn-mist,
They stand, that naught the spot assail
The loving sun hath kissed.

On the green hill-side lowing kine
Are heard, and bleating flocks,
And, where the farm-yard roofings shine,
The shrilly crowing cocks.

But naught of sight or sound doth mar
The holy Sabbath-time,
Where the white belfry gleams afar
Whispers the village-chime.

Like a fond mother's kiss, the scene
Soothes the unrestful brain ;
Earth's love, so smilingly serene,
Wins the sick soul from pain.

Here are no traces to record
Man's crimes or his distress ;
The brooding spirit looks abroad
In happy loneliness.

How spiritual seems the place !
The blue, unclouded skies
Look down, as when a thoughtful face
To yearning dreams replies.

'T is well to kneel in pillared aisle,
And swell prayer's choral tone ;
But holiest feelings crave awhile
To find themselves alone.

And as the landscape, viewed from hence,
Dwindles in sight and sound,
While heaven, in still magnificence,
Spreads broader arms around ;

So, from this lofty mountain-goal
To which my feet have trod,
Life's objects lessen, — and the soul
Seemeth more near to God.

A SONG.



I.

WHEN gaudy Day foldeth his drooping wing
 In Twilight's bowers,
And Evening's dewy breath is murmuring
 Amid the flowers,
I ask for thee, whose presence did enhance
 That hour of rest ;
Thee, — listening to whose magic utterance,
 The soul was blest.

II.

And when the thronging planets through the sky
 In beauty tread,
And on the ocean, mirrored tremblingly,
 Their light is shed,
I ask for thee, whose eye, so chastely meek,
 Like stars was true ;
Thee, — whose cool kisses on my fevered cheek
 Fell as the dew.

III.

And when Night's clustering constellations fade
 With Morning's birth,
And she, in rainbow-coloured robes arrayed,
 Awakens earth,
I ask for thee, whose smile of loving light
 Warmed this cold clay ;
Thee, — 'neath whose joyous glance the spirit's night
 Melted away.

IV.

And where in splendour's glittering festival
 The mirthful meet,
While to glad music's cadenced measures fall
 Their twinkling feet,
I ask for thee, whose form of swanlike grace
 Was lightest there ;
Thee, — without whom life's sunniest garden-place
 Were cold and bare.

V.

I ask for thee in vain. Joyless I hail
 Day's dazzling car ;
Scentless and dim are Evening's odorous gale
 And Twilight's star ;
The heart hath lost its pulses, — youth its fire ;
 Sunlight seems gloom ;
And recollection haunts with tuneless lyre
 Affection's tomb.

AN ELEGY.



OH, many a tear must mortals shed
O'er unenduring gifts !
Below, around, and overhead,
Life's painted pageant shifts.

Since memory's birth, no year but took
Something the heart held dear ;
Each page of life on which we look
Is blotted with a tear.

Some mourn for greater, some for less, —
'T is man's own estimate
That makes all things which harm or bless
Seem valueless or great.

Friendship laments each vanished joy,
The king his diadem ;
And is a child's grief for his toy
Less keen than theirs to them ?

Then, moralist, no proud surprise,
Nor scornfully deride,
That some few drops should fill the eyes
When even a dog hath died : —

A dog, when judged of by the rule
Which men of science lend ;
But in the heart's less rigid school,
A playfellow, — a friend.

What most we value in our kind,
And celebrate in rhyme, —
Love, gratitude, — were all defined
In his glad pantomime.

Beauty, which oft the Fates confer,
Frail woman's fatal dower,
Was his, unheeded, as he were
An animated flower.

No velvet softer to the touch
Than was his silken hair ;
And like two sparkling diamonds, such
His fringed eyeballs were.

No restless humming-bird, whose bill
Spring's honey-dew doth sip,
Glancing from bud to blossom still,
Was half so blithe as Gyp.

Beyond his species he was kind,
Affectionate, sincere ;
In him how many a grace combined
Which makes an inmate dear !

What man shall dare unknit the chain
To bind all creatures given,
And tell, by weight, how large a brain
Has any hope of heaven ?

Perchance the Indian was not wrong
In his philosophy,
And to thy nature doth belong
Some being yet to be.

Who was it said that in God's eye
The sparrow was a care ?
Thus thy brief parting agony
Might in his pity share.

Farewell, then, playful little pet !
Each grief hath its degree,
And, 'mid life's joys and sorrows, yet
We 'll sometimes think of thee.

And there 's a moral in thy fate,
Imperative and clear, —
What lot to-morrow may await
Objects to-day most dear !

Thus shall thy life a lesson prove,
Thy death a homily,
And this poor fantasy of love
A parable shall be.

A SONG.



FROM my own fair-haired Sweden,
The Vi-King's old home,
Unto Freedom's young Eden
With greeting I come :
For from Tropic to Pole
In humanity's throng
We 're made kindred in soul
By Truth, Friendship, and Song.

In my far, native bower
My carol I 've pour'd,
And in cottage and tower,
To peasant and lord ;
But the goal was not won,
Fame's bright temple was dark
Till to Liberty's sun
I could soar like the lark.

Then from ocean's blue waters
To prairie and wild,
Greet me ! matrons and daughters,
A sister — a child !
Men of mountain or plain,
Strong in arm — brave in heart !
To your limitless reign
Hail the Pilgrim of Art.

Music breathes on each dwelling
'Neath laurel or pine,
And emotions there swelling
She maketh divine ;
Let me come then to tell
All that song hath expressed ;
Let the Nightingale dwell
In the Eagle's proud nest.

U N K N O W N.



ART hath no language to express —
It doth but half interpret Thought —
The symmetry of loveliness
With which my memory is fraught.

Thou flashed'st on my dazzled sight,
Even within that festal room
With forms of youthful beauty bright,
Like a white dove through twilight's gloom.

One moment in the hurrying dance
We met — thy hand was laid in mine ;
That touch — thy soul-revealing glance
Thrilled like some melody divine.

It was as if at midnight's hour,
Upon her planet-written scroll,
Some angel gave to man the power
In one brief look to read the whole.

For there, exhaustless, were combined
The ores of mind, and thought, and sense ;
But all made holy and refined
In the white fires of innocence.

Thy presence passed and I was left
Lonely amid the brilliant throng ;
Stunned, as one suddenly bereft
Of what his heart had cherished long.

More of thee I may never know ;
My pathway ne'er unite with thine,
Nor, in our pilgrimage below,
Thy gaze again encounter mine.

But through my sleep thy form shall glide,
Thy accents eloquently speak,
And, like the kisses of a bride,
Thy fragrant hair shall bathe my cheek.

I'll count life's waking cares a dream,
And dreams my life's reality ;
And every tear then shed shall seem
A silent token left by thee.

RACHEL.



WHEN some familiar landmark, round whose base
Cluster white villages and forests green,
Is blotted out by drifting mists, the scene
Loses the very key-stone of its grace.
And now that curtaining clouds have hid thy face —
The moulded outline of whose stately mien
Proclaimed the vassal Passions' crownèd queen —
Art's airy visions melt in empty space.
No more in breathing personation starts
The grandeur of the master-minds of old ;
Nerveless is now the grasp which held men's hearts
Trembling, like the imprisoned bird we hold.
Death in majestic wrath hath crushed the clay
Which vexed him with its mockery of his sway.

SONNET.



BACK from the land where ever-fadeless flowers
Cling greenly round old Empire's mouldering clay
And blossom still in Genius' twilight ray,
We welcome thee to these, thy natal bowers.
Unto man's spirit in life's varying hours
Some accents come, which, like the beams of Day,
Irradiate joy — and where joy's buds delay
Their sluggish growth — fall soft as vernal showers ;
In whose full cadence over-mute Despair
Exhales its anguish and grows gently less ;
Which hush young mirth to happiness — like prayer ;
And lend to Care a moment's blessedness.
Such are thy tones — such powers to thee belong,
Priestess of Art — Interpreter of Song.

SONNET.



UPON the climbing mountain's topmost stair —
Piled half-way up to heaven — lingering I stay
To count the dying pulses of the Day.
These cliffs upheaved around me, bleak and bare —
Once parcel of yon valley warm and fair —
Stand, by Earth's inner tremors torn apart;
Like fragments of some Titan's broken heart,
Divorced from all the changeful beauty there.
And man is thus — through many varying years
His spirit moulds itself to hours and days,
Till some great grief or passion-burst uprears
A monumental life, whose passive gaze
Reflects, incredulous, Hope's crimson morn
And takes her good-night kiss with a sad smile of scorn.

VAGRANTS.

“VERY LIKE A WAIL.”

I AM a most unhappy man ;
I ’ll tell you how it is :
I can’t complain that I have not
An interesting phys-
Iognomy — or have not conned
The maxims of Polonius ;
Or that the Fates have shown themselves
Unduly *Parcæ*-monious.

Those ancient gentlewomen stood
As sponsors round my cradle ;
And when you speak of silver spoons
You ’d better say a ladle.
They promised I should roll in wealth ;
Should be the glass of fashion ;
That any candidate should win
Whom I had bet my cash on.

They braided in my “mingled yarn”
Long yarns of useless knowledge ;
I ’ve had a private tutor — and
I ’ve — partly — been through college.

I don't regret I could not stay ;
Though fellows were so partial
To me — though peacefully inclined —
They would have made me Marshal.

I sigh not for the buzzing hive
Of academic Bs
Who swarm when Alma Mater writes
Her annual pair o' Ds.
The trouble is, I recognize
A vacuum in my life ;
As my aunt says — I feel I owe
Society a wife.

But though my heart is sensitive
As the Atlantic cable,
Like decks that deck the surface — it 's
Exceedingly unstable.
Amid the multifarious charms
In which the sex rejoice,
My wayward fancy spreads her wing,
Incompetent for choice.

My bosom's lord is rent and torn
Beyond all power of stitching —
A thing of shreds and patches — for
They all are so bewitching.
I say alack ! — I feel a lack ;
I see no damsel pass,
I hear no rustling silken dress
But that I cry "a-lass !"

At Monday's ball I dance with Blanche,
 And wish that I were *her* man ;
 Or feel despondent if she don't
 Select me in the German :
 On Tuesday I 'm in love with Kate,
 And long to call *her* my ward ;
 With that dear, missionary nose
 Which points the public skyward.

At Wednesday's opera I sue
 To Sue — the mild monastic ;
 On Thursday I adore the bland ;
 On Friday the sarcastic.
 But though I vow my weakness shall
 End with the week, on Sunday ;
 'T is all in vain — I know it will
 Begin again on Monday.

There 's Grace, with glorious orbs of black
 A man might sun his heart in ;
 They call her “Goddess of the Day” —
 I answer “Day and Martin.”
 I should succumb to her at once,
 Nor further seek for new ones —
 But then I turn — there Amy stands,
 With such transcendent blue ones !

Blue as the bluest gentian — that
 Autumnal flower which *my* aunt —
 Autumnal too — describes as “culled”
 By William Cullen Bryant.

They meet your thirsting gaze like wells
 Of deepest sapphire hue :
 Unfathomed wells — as if you saw
 To China — and right through.

But one by one, alas ! away
 To others' homes they go :
 Dame Fortune smiled on me, but ah !
 Her wheel has turned out woe.
 Oh, happy Mormon ! who can take
 A score or so of wives ;
 And not — like Bluebeard — feel obliged
 To take their separate lives.

And if a man can have six wives,
 I sometimes question whether
 There 's any harm if he should choose
 All six of them together.
 I 'll ask our parson — he 's a met-
 Aphysical agrarian ;
 But then *he* could not marry us,
 For he 's a Unitarian.

So I must fall *in* love again,
 And *out* — and o'er and o'er ;
 Until, like Solomon, I reach
 The Biblical fourscore.
 But why one's life should be a prey
 To fickleness and doubt —
 Why this is thusly — is a thing
 No fellow can find out.

THE CHILDREN'S SYMPHONY.



THERE is, not far from Bartholdsgad, a place
Where Art and Nature blend in rival grace —
Where elms and alders canopy with green
The rivulet which bubbles on between,
So that the sunrise over Salzburg mountain
Can scarce look in to smile on lawn and fountain.
Here all the Salzburg children, kith and kin,
Waken the echoes with their merry din,
Fluttering as lightly as the down of thistles,
Singing and playing on their willow whistles.
This spot, old Haydn, when the sky was ruddy,
Made, oftentimes, his summer morning's study;
For the child-nature of the kind musician
Found a good game of romps the best physician,
And genius, like the noble race of Horners,
Picks out its plums in most unlooked-for corners;
“Now,” says he to himself, “it isn't fair
That I should gain so much and give no share,
And what 's the use of science to a man

If he can't do at least as much as Pan?
I'll make these children all 'Professors Blow,'
To prove how far a little wind can go;
And whatsoe'er the classicists may say
Why shouldn't Music have its 'entremets'?
We don't want all our lives a daily joint
Of solid beef or solid counterpoint,
In time and season both soufflets and jokes
Are good for children and for older folks."
Thus he soliloquized, and up and down
Ransacked the toy-shops of the little town,
Bought up a perfect china aviary, —
Quail, meadow-lark, bob-lincoln and canary:
Then, as variety is half the battle,
A drum and trumpet, and a watchman's rattle;
Lastly he chose an earthenware Cuckoo,
And took them home to try what each could do.
With pleasant fancies floating in his head
Late in the night our artist sought his bed,
Next morning rubbed his hands — his task was done —
And chuckled with anticipated fun.
He found that he must have a full-grown fellow
To give a solid ground-work with the 'Cello,
And then to soften down the various din
He adds a first and second violin.
"Now," says he, "Cuckoo, your contentment *may* grow
As merry as you please in my Allegro;
You, Messieurs Quail and Thrush and Lark are set
To play the Trio in the Minuet;
Then, to wind up, you all must do your best to
Send people home, good-humoured with your Presto,

And let the laughing literati see
That Music too can have its "*jeux d'esprit*,"
And while Art owns allegiance to the schools
Genius can sometimes work with sorry tools."

So said ; so done — and many a one with glee
Has heard, since then, The Children's Symphony.

LINES TO A SUMMER COMPANION.



TO-DAY upon Life's heaving main
Our anchored barks lie side by side ;
To-morrow, steering forth again,
Our separate courses must divide.

But though our fast-receding track
Hide from the view these summer-bowers ;
Imagination, looking back,
Shall count the pleasures which were ours.

The songs — the drives — the daily chess ; —
The swimming in the mountain pond,
Begirt with farm and wilderness ;
With blue Monadnock far beyond.

And though again we may not meet
We will not yield to vain regret ;
But make the recollection sweet,
And count it gain that we have met.

TO A BOY — WITH A “LIFE OF
WASHINGTON.”



SCARCELY can History's pencil draw
A nobler form — of purer fame ;
And we count Freedom — Justice — Law,
With him identical in name.

'T was not the glory which we see,
And fold our hands to contemplate ;
But such as — sought in due degree —
Can make the humblest truly great.

So let me hope when Manhood's strife
With Thought and Passion, shades your looks,
This record of a great man's life
May still find place among your books.

And if — undimmed by worldly spell —
Your heart still counts its rosary,
With those who love and wish you well
I pray you to remember me.

LINES

SUGGESTED BY "THE PEN AND THE ALBUM."



WE 'VE had some charming, confidential lines
'Twixt Pen and Album of Miss Catherine's ;
Wherein, on Pen's authority, we 're told
Becky's biography was writ with gold,
Besides epistles, volumes, essays, notes,
Equal to half the Gallic Empire's votes ;
Proof — though a paradox, perhaps — you can, sir,
Reply to letters, now, without an "anser."
Undoubted reason this for jubilee
Among the gray-goose tribe, by land or sea,
To gosling and to gosling's mother and her
Most Mormon spouse, the patriarchal Gander.
But though this save each feathered flock some dozens,
There 's no such luck for their poor human cousins —
For wheresoe'er his golden weapon falls,
In lodgings, club-house, cot, or castle halls,
'Mid English rollicking or Irish whack-ery,
He still is death to geese — this Mr. Thackeray.

A DISCLAIMER.



WHEN Paris left his father's flocks
For ladies' smiles, and lips of coral ;
His conduct soon deserved the stocks,
And grew decidedly immoral.

And the poor peasant who had brought
His wild-flowers to the Virgin's shrine,
In the belief became distraught
That she repaid him with a sign.

Then Ye who haunt the upper skies !
Accept your dues — nor seem to know it ;
Lest if ye bend to earth your eyes,
Ye spoil the man — to thank the Poet.

THE BIRDS' REPLY.



“DEAR MADAM :

We the exiled English sparrows
Have undergone such sufferings as it harrows
The soul to think of — for when winter came
We didn't know a single neighbour's name ;
And Nature here gives us no cause to thank her ;
She takes away the worm and leaves the canker ;
And when we sought among the elms to house,
They took their leaves and gave us empty boughs.
But Hope peeps through the blanket of the dark —
We hear from day to day a tiny bark —
A door is opened — a fair lady comes
And — fancy, oh, bird-fancier ! — brings us crumbs.
So now we send a snow-bird — a committee
Of one — to thank you for your thoughtful pity ;
And when the spring this siege of famine raises,
Our fledgelings shall be taught to chirp your praises,
And in the Public Library shall thumb well
The ‘ Life and Times ’ of *our* Protector Crumbwell.”

OCCASIONAL.

THE MUSE'S LAMENT.



A rejoinder to "Nine New Poets."

ILL-FATED offspring ! short-lived volume ! must
The mourning Muse so soon say, "Dust to dust" !
Thy footsteps from Parnassus turned about
Almost before thy mother thought thee "out."
But I 'll forgive the world thy death and show it
I 'm a good Christian, if a sorry poet.
How should'st thou 'scape those knights in pasteboard vizors
Who slay small books with goose-quill, ink and scissors ;
What hope for thee among thy eight young cousins,
When Herods' massacre such babes by dozens ?
I knew the feeble tenure of thy life,
And yet 't was hard to use so dull a knife ;
I kiss the rod, and yet it stirs my bile
To see the man dissect thee with a smile,
And scoff, regardless of maternal tears,
And pull thy little carcass by the ears.
I knew full well reviewers must be fed,
But did n't think — like ghouls — they ate the dead.
Yet is it Nature's universal law,
One insect dies to fill another's maw ;

And if an insect serve its friends for dinner,
Surely a saint may sup upon a sinner.
But must the worthier die to keep from starving
These critics, guiltless of the art of carving?
Who without wit enough to earn their salt
Gain a scant livelihood by finding fault ;
Turn from their hospitable door the guest
However worthy if he 's oddly dressed ;
Quarter the culprit in their pious fury, —
Self-constituted counsel, judge, and jury, —
And then the misplaced fragments re-combine
To prove the folly of their first design,
And show in strife, like kindred at the bar,
How members of one family can jar ?
Thus when a broken looking-glass distorts — some gander
Copies the image there, and calls it "candour,"
Or to a telescope will put his ears
And listen for the music of the spheres.
Pains-taking, modest creatures ! — if you doubt 'em,
Try how the world would get along without 'em —
Who volunteer dry-nursing to the town ;
"Take it, my love — it 's wholesome — gulp it down,"
Or, shaking solemnly a seedy hat,
Cry, "Naughty, naughty Public, don't touch that !
No ! mind your work, my dears, you have n't time
Or taste to judge of reason or of rhyme,
We 'll tell you what is wrong and what is right."
And then each proffers you his farthing light —
Not very bright when near — and its assistance
Elsewhere, in inverse ratio to the distance.
Show them a fresh-blown rose, they sneering say,

“We saw the same, last year, this very day ;”
Or else perhaps they wrap it in a dossil
Of lint or wool, and treat it as a fossil,
Or bring a cart-load of lethean mud
And bury your whole garden in the bud.
If the poor bard maintain a sober pace,
They beg he 'll stir himself and try a race ;
Should he affect a more erratic flight,
Say they can't follow — pray him to alight :
Suppose he take them on a summer sea,
They yearn for tempests and sublimity ;
Sublimity forsooth ! why, bless the fellows,
They think a hurricane 's a pair of bellows,
And that a man can ride a thunderbolt
As safely as a jockey does a colt.
One calls his household round — “ This day will I
Regale myself and you on blackbird pie ;
But two or three won't do — we cannot dine —
Self, wife, and children — upon less than nine.”
So far, so well — but mark you now the pith,
The gist that 's hidden in this nursery myth ;
Be very careful when your servants bring
The pie to table — lest the blackbirds sing ;
You lose your dinner and destroy your fun
If crust or crustiness be underdone ;
Nor can the merits of a dish be tested
Until it be both eaten and digested.
Then when his temper 's bad he pours a vial
Of wrath upon the shadow of “ The Dial.”
Grumbles because folks' honest dues are paid ;
Fye, fye ! Sir ! I 'd not trust to you in trade.

And then most cruelly he turns and taunts
Our single relatives and spinster aunts ;
Need there two bodies, pray, to make one soul,
And are your gloves, good friend ! without a hole ?
I fear no ministering angel 's by
To quiet your young ravens when they cry.
Must all these fair republics perish or annex
Themselves to monarchs of the sterner sex ?
Then while their evening smile all eyes bewitches
Quarrel, next morning, who shall wear the breeches ?
Or ape his schemes of vanity or pelf
The heart's cramped orbit circling round itself ;
Shall none be left, with light and warmth imbued,
To bless — like Heaven — the evil and the good ;
To guard as vestals in this world of strife
The soft amenities of daily life ?
To breathe on all the blessing of their care,
Uncircumscribed, unconscious as the air ?

Why not let such as like to do so, know
Our thoughts, however feebly they may glow ;
What harm is there in having what we think —
Our mental physiognomies — in ink ?
Be candid now — most courteous comrade — hain't
You had your face immortalized in paint ?
Does n't your spouse behold her lord and master,
In a gilt frame, gaze grimly from the plaster,
And when that master quits awhile his reign
Does n't its pictured potency remain ?
Then if your youngest born be out of sorts
Is it not there its wily nurse resorts,

And cries, — displaying the paternal frown, —
“ You little wretch ! I ’ll take your father down ” ?

But hold — I came to sorrow, not revile,
Though that ’s a little in old Homer’s style,
Whose heroes, when a friend they could n’t save,
Consoled themselves by sparring at the grave.
Well ! the worst ’s past, thou ’rt dead beyond all flattery —
Senseless to critical galvanic battery ;
A second time, perhaps, I were unable
To see thee on the anatomic table ;
Even with the mitigation which the age
Lends to the surgeon’s art — the reviewers’ page —
When, thanks to ether and a leaden pate,
The patient slumbers while they operate.
Nor will I doubt thine immortality —
We need no proof that dulness cannot die,
And somewhere — well fenced in by learned rules —
There is, thank God, a Paradise of Fools.
There shalt thou take thy cobweb-curtained rest,
Oh ! far beyond thy brilliant brethren blest ;
Far beyond those on whom the world has doted —
Mis-comprehended, mis-admired, mis-quoted :
On every school-girl’s theme by piecemeal strung,
The burden of each blundering school-boy’s tongue.
Ne’er shall thy reputation be the frame
Where callow commentators climb to fame ;
Or be by blockheads, when the fever ’s caught ’em,
Exhumed to serve a Quarterly post-mortem ;
Never by scribblers when they want a point
Be served up to subscribers — joint by joint ;

Ne'er shalt thou be for would-be Wit a cloak
When he would fain trot out some feeble joke ;
Nor — while 'Time's tide with thee he chance to skim —
Hear the dunce chuckle, "How we apples swim!"
Ragged and starving, never shalt thou wait,
Scorned like the beggar, at the rich man's gate ;
Nor, while his lackeys drive thee from the doors,
Shall carping curs flock round to lick thy sores.
So now to Pluto's kingdom — have no fears ;
Thou 'lt not be kept outside a hundred years :
Thou 'st had a decent burial — takest down
Thy toll — the ninth part of a martyr's crown ;
Enough, no doubt, unless they 've played thee tricks,
And it prove brass — to take thee o'er the Styx.
If not, thou 'rt light — some cold day try the ice ;
Or Charon — thou 'rt so young — might take half-price ;
With brother bores there shall thy sufferings cease
And thy oblivious friends, on earth, have peace.

LES TABLEAUX VIVANTS.



“Noms de plume.”

BESIDE your country fireside as you sit,
Fancy and Friendship near, and genial Wit ;
Where by the lamp you turn the pictured page
And hear, far off, the world's vexed ocean rage,
Or, in the dazzling noontide, gaze below
On the broad valley white with glittering snow,
O'er which the pines of Holyoke darkly bend
And a stern grandeur to the landscape lend —
Have you a wish, dear Friend, to learn the ways
In which your city kindred pass their days?
I doubt it not — e'en in the hermit's cell,
Where e'en the cloisters' joyless inmates dwell,
Where the pale student wakes at midnight's hour,
Where botanists anatomize a flower,
Where children break their toys and cry, “Oh, see, Oh!”
Where science counts the stars with Galileo —
From 'out cowl, frock — whatever mask there be —
Peeps listening, keen-eyed Curiosity.

Well then — your sister, tired of public shows,
Determined on some family Tableaux ;

And for the manly parts, as need requires,
Invites some sundry brigands, knights, and squires.
Robert and I, and Holker must be there ;
And for an Earl "motley's the only wear."
While as a Pacha, with three tails of horsehair,
Fred Wyman did old Seyd, in Byron's "Corsair :"
'Trembling and pale when from the Dervise' cloak
The pirate on his frightened vision broke.
But for the women all description fails —
Paint to yourself Greek jackets — Turkish veils —
Fair forms which in their eastern lendings shone
As if each heroine's grace were all their own ;
Or in the regal robes, with regal mein,
Stood proud and graceful, "every inch a queen."
There were brocades and jewels — silks and fur ;
And Mr. Peter the upholsterer,
Who came to see that everything went right,
Manage the curtain and arrange the light.
But then I must n't prose, or else you 'll say,
"We 'll read this letter, Sir, some future day."

Well to begin — after rehearsals due,
Witnessed — as critics — by a chosen few,
The evening came ; and with it many a guest,
Obedient to Elizabeth's behest —
The lion-hearted queen, old Henry's daughter,
Who loved one day to smile — the next to slaughter ;
But on that night she laid her sceptre down,
And reigned — the Queen of Hearts — without a frown.
'T was told, "At eight precisely we begin ;"
So, just before, the guests were ushered in :

Close packed, they sit, and gossip and admire,
And say, "Excuse," "Pray sit a little nigher :"
While white-gloved beaux around the ladies crowd,
Admiring *self* in silence — *them* aloud.
The ladies, as becomes the softer sex,
Half smile, half blush, half bend their swanlike necks ;
And as those notes of praise they duly thank,
Wonder how much they 'd cash for, at the bank.
Our host had all arranged with platforms fit,
So that each row above their neighbours sit.
Doubly well planned, for thus each one could view
These scenes of pathos from the first one through,
And the whole audience, as it thus appears,
Howe'er hard-hearted, needs must be "in tiers."
There were bright eyes and scientific pates
And heads of fashion — Mrs. Gaza Gates,
The Sheridans, and Brinsleys, and some bright,
Charming young ladies by the name of Wright.
And there in kindly smilingness there stood
Old Berkshire's paragon of womanhood ;
Sweet Sarah Snow, who laughs as she could sigh not,
And that dear, gentle creature, Fanny Y. Knott.
With men and maids and wives sufficient more
To make the audience out, perhaps, three-score :
Each and all perfect in their several ways,
But whom, just now, I have n't space to praise,
Save one, transplanted from her natal bowers
To blossom in this northern clime of ours ;
A welcome guest from the far, orient sea,
The Greek of Greeks — the graceful Eulalie.

Well! we began with Kenilworth, you know,
To tell poor Amy's story in dumb show.
First scene at Lidcote Hall, where old Sir Hugh
Blesses his daughter and betroths us two ;
Your sister had been kind enough to ask
Me to perform the very pleasing task
Of young Tressilian — so I took the hand
Of the fair Amy, at her sire's command ;
While old Sir Hugh bent o'er us like a willow,
His aged form protuberant with a pillow ;
And Amy — that's Miss Wyman — rather scared,
Cries, " Ring the bell, dear me — well, we're prepared."
The bell was rung, and Peter gave a jerk,
But the confounded curtain would n't work ;
So Amy, she takes breath — and we combine —
Sir Hugh and I — to take a glass of wine.
Soon though 'twas re-arranged, and we began ;
Then through the house what murmured plaudits ran —
" How sweet," " how venerable," and " how still ;"
You may apply these adjectives at will ;
One is Sir Hugh's, one Amy's, and the other
Belongs to one I wish were Amy's brother.
She wore that look which every heart bewitches,
Sir Hugh a wig, and I bright yellow breeches.
Well! that scene closed, the next was where Janet
Brings her a letter and the gorgeous set
Of jewels from her knightly lord — the Earl ;
The first absorbs the mistress, *these* the girl.
Then where the Countess views the gems which deck
Her high-born lord's aristocratic neck.
Next where Tressilian brings her in the news

That old Sir Hugh is shaking in his shoes ;
While she stands sobbing as her heart would break,
Uncertain which to choose and which forsake :
In her fair face, Love, Duty, Memory strive,
The cheek all marble — eyes all too alive.
Next she implores Elizabeth's protection ;
One proud surprise — the other all dejection.
Then the wroth queen confronts her rival there
With the vain minion who her throne would share —
He falls abashed before his sovereign's feet ;
His wife's sad eyes her flashing glances meet.
I should have said that where the monarch stood
Was a disloyal spot of churlish mud,
To save from which her dainty satin shoe
Raleigh right gallantly his mantle threw.
This in a former picture had been shown,
And now she made the cloak a kind of throne.
Thus through these varied scenes of joy and woe,
In silent, mimic art, our actors go ;
Until, to end the sad, eventful story,
Poor Amy lies all mangled, cold, and gory ;
Just as base Varney down the cellar pitched her,
Just as she lay because no one had kitched her :
And there the Earl — false lord — disloyal knight —
Fastens his eyes upon the harrowing sight ;
While woe-begone Tressilian raves and stamps
And tears his hair and gazes at the lamps.
Then the swift curtain falls, and some repair
Into the entry for a breath of air :
The actors to their chambers run — perplexed
To find the dresses to appear in next ;

The gentlemen suggest some flattering things,
The ladies fan themselves, and Holker sings.

Next after comes the Corsair — so prepare
For a short voyage and a change of air.
Lo! the fair shores — the cloudless sky of Greece ;
Her verdant valleys, white with many a fleece :
Imagine sheep upon the hill-side browsing,
And in the foreground pirates seen carousing.
Two form the fierce, ferocious band — the rest
Had been there too — but could n't then be dressed.
The bell is rung — the curtain rises — and
Discovers them stretched idly on the strand :
Their vests are calico to look like silk,
Their goblets, cups which hold the children's milk.
Then might you hear the raptured audience cry,
“ Dear me ! how good,” — “ how gracefully they lie,”
“ What bright red jackets, just as in the Polka ;”
“ Why, there 's a face I know,” — “ that 's Mr. Holker.”
Next scene, Anselmo starts from where he lay,
And points the ship just entering the bay.
Next scene where Conrad looks the billet through
And learns the durance of his gallant crew ;
Medora watching as he reads the letter,
And wishing from her soul the news were better.
Robert was Conrad, and the sad Medora
Was by Miss Wyman — not the one named Cora,
But fair Northampton's intellectual peasant,
Whose dwelling makes a pleasant street more pleasant.
Conrad looked most peculiar, gloomy, grand,
One eye was tenderness — one harsh command.

Some timid dames considered him "alarming ;"
But more romantic ones declared him "charming."
Don't mention this "last judgment" to his wife,
I would n't hint at mischief for my life —
Sometimes you know, though, when the cat 's away,
The most exemplary of mice will play.
Next comes the parting — Conrad and his spouse ;
Tears, lamentations, promises, and vows.
Next scene — he scares the venerable Seyd,
Who looks like a gray squirrel fairly "*treed*."
This scene was excellent — so truly Greek,
They did, as one says, everything but speak :
As well perhaps without, — it may be doubted
If half had understood him had he spouted.
Then came the prison scene, where fond Gulnare
Visits his dungeon with dishevelled hair ;
Veiling the taper's light with taper hand,
While her rapt gaze his haggard features scanned.
Next where she hands the dagger to advise
He should her aged spouse phlebotomize.
Next where he sees the fatal crimson stain
Burnt through her forehead to her maddened brain ;
Then where he saves her from the conflagration,
And then presents her to the pirate nation.
Last, where Medora — who for grief had died —
Lies, with the Corsair mourning at her side ;
But this last scene excited some complaint,
It looked so real, it made one lady faint.

Then 'mid the audience followed the confusion
Which marks the breaking up of an illusion.

Some few went home — some other ones went up
To change their dress — the rest went down to sup.
And when the crowd had gone, the pirate crew
Remained to taste a glass of wine or two :
Unhappy Conrad ceases to bewail
And looks for consolation to a quail ;
While the old Seyd forgets his recent shock,
Immersed in oysters and some glorious hock ;
And all the late so pensive company
Chorus to Holker in a college glee.
Though half the lamps went out, that gave no trouble,
We saw the few which Fortune left us, double ;
This latter fact, I beg though, don't opine
To be an odd corollary of wine ;
No ! 't was the ladies' eyes whose joyous gaze
Mirrored the gas-lights with a double blaze.
Time tripped as lightly as a school-girl's tongue,
Some told a joke — some laughed at it — some sung :
Heedless of sleep, we lengthened out the revel
Until the servants wished us at the Devil —
No ! no ! I mean we sipped the generous juice
Till the domestics wished us at the Deuce.
And I fear, too, our hospitable host
Thought each a kind of gastronomic ghost
Who haunted him, and would n't think of going
Before the old, canonical cock-crowing.
At length we went, beneath as bright a moon
As ever drank the diamond dew of June,
And in as keen a wind as ever blew
Where, on the Alps, Napoleon's standard flew :
But we cared naught for that — we were as gay

As reapers on a sunny summer's day ;
And sought our pillows — where, I ween, there came
Full many a dream of Pirate, Knight, and Dame.
Life is a dream, they say, of joy and strife,
Oh ! would some gentle dreams would turn to life !
But I won't moralize — I have n't time ;
Midnight rings out from Park Street's airy chime ;
Telling the week's last day is at its end,
And the still Sabbath holier thoughts should lend.
There is a time for mirth — for childish play —
A time when meditation bids us pray.
And now from my stilled heart ascends the prayer
For all I love — for all whose love I share :
Fair be the angel band — the visions bright
Which keep their spirits company to-night.
My thought is with them o'er the wintry sea,
And where, this side the wave, their dwellings be.
Now then, good night, and when this seal you break,
Forgive my prosiness for friendship's sake,
And as you glance these many pages o'er,
Burn them before you "write me down a bore."
So with all love to those who dwell around,
Within whose hearts my memory is found,
Believe me Yours until the Stygian tollman
Shall claim his obolus of

JAMES F. COLMAN.

PROLOGUE

TO THE PERFORMANCES OF AN AMATEUR THEATRICAL COMPANY, AT CHICKERING'S HALL, IN AID OF THE VOLUNTEERS.



A TWELVEMONTH since, the lengthened nights to cheer,
Our actors raised their mimic pageant here,
And, while fair Peace in listless leisure smiled,
Their masquerade the lingering hours beguiled.
But now, when festal lights are few and dim,
And drum and trumpet swell the battle-hymn,
Now that the sullen war-cloud, dark and dun,
Hangs o'er the birthplace of our Washington,
And mad rebellion pours its angry wave
Hard by the hallowed precincts of his grave ;
When our beleaguered Capital is set
With hedge of battery and of bayonet,
The thoughtful or the stern perchance may ask,
Why, at such season, try our trivial task ?
A question pertinent and just, 't is true,
But still the subject has another view.
The bleakest climate has its summer hours,
When autumn's fruits are heralded by flowers ;
At epochs when long faces are in vogue
Austerity oft cloaks the clever rogue,

But breathing-space for laughter always finds
Apology in philosophic minds ;
And even when driven by Misfortune's goad,
Courage and Pluck will *whistle* on the road.
Who is there, that reads history, who blames
That warring Greece still kept her Isthmian Games ?
And earlier still, no doubt the sombre ark
Heard in its cabin many a jocund lark ;
And very like the cousins there together
Got up charades on deck in pleasant weather.
Indeed, all history shows there 's no affinity
'Twixt Wisdom's emblem and its fair divinity ;
For Chaucer never chronicled the owl, —
Minerva's favourite, — as a cheerful fowl.
But there 's no need of argument — you know
The proverb of the always-bended bow ;
And though our hearts are at the Tournament
For whose fierce lists our gallant beaux are bent,
We want some little merriment — like froth —
To show the yeast is working at the North.
The gay Germania's strains resound no more
Where twinkling footsteps circle round the floor ;
We 've no more jolly rides in sleigh or cutter ;
Papanti, too, has lost his " Bread and Butter ;"
Logan and Dalton show their ebon faces
No longer 'mid the crowd of ball-room Graces ;
And our Champagne — domestic make or foreign —
Pops only for the prisoners at Fort Warren.
At whatsoever door the patriot knocks,
He finds his sister patriot knitting socks,
While, on the floor, the scientific kittens

Study cat-hop-trics with one-fingered mittens.
All right — for if the brave are making breaches
It is but fair the fair should take some stitches ;
But it is right, too, we put bound and measure
As well to knitting stockings as to pleasure,
And that some festive interlude should vary
The weightier labours of the Sanitary,
Lest we — like misers in their quest of wealth —
Fall victims to an over-zeal for health.
Why, even in the cold Crimean trenches,
The soldiers had their stage and critics' benches,
And, writers tell us, each heroic lad
Fought better for the jollity he 'd had.
Indeed, in wit or war, those gallant Zouaves
Disdained the doing any thing by halves.
As *there*, the elastic tread and spirits light
Were good for honest fun and honest fight,
So *our* young heroes show that merry dancers
Work none the worse for their Quadrille and Lancers,
For we all know that Burnside, Banks, and Sherman
Recruited their best soldiers from "The German."

But my Muse hurries me too far and fast ;
I 'm but the oyster of to-night's repast ;
And in your eyes — the stars of our astrology —
I read a dispensation from apology.
Though Shakespeare says the world 's a stage, or stages,
We trust that *our* seven acts may not seem ages ;
And that you 'll hold our pastime no abuse,
But see its healthful and its serious use.
However stocks and manufactures are

'T will serve to keep our spirits up at par ;
And your rich bounty goes to swell the store
That cheers the exile on Potomac's shore.
There, while the watch-fires flicker on his tent,
Through this long winter of his banishment,
Your thoughtful deeds and offices of love
Shall nestle in his bosom like the dove ;
And while he lingers far from social charms
His heart shall bless his fair allies in arms,
Each of whom, here, in loyal measure, shares
His daily toil, his bravery and his cares ;
Whose prayers make musical the silent night,
That Heaven guard him that guards his Country's right ;
Who, when in God's good time, the day shall come
Which turns his footsteps toward his Northern home,
When Freedom's final battle has been fought,
For which, like his, *her* heart and hands have wrought,
When, 'neath Heaven's rainbow for triumphal arch,
Her listening ear shall catch his homeward march,
Shall stand like beckoning angel at the door
To which his longing feet return once more,
Adorn with festal pomp her halls and bowers,
And welcome back her Knight with smiles and flowers.

MODERN METAMORPHOSES.

I HAD a dream some afternoons ago
Which took me off four thousand miles or so ;
I was transported, in the arms of Morpheus,
To Greece, the ancient home of Jove and Orpheus ;
And there, for want of knowing how to talk,
I took my cane and started for a walk.
Hungry and solitary in my rambles,
I tore my clothes with thorns — my hands with brambles ;
Longing for conversation, and that *I* had
A sandwich, or at least a Hammy-Dryad.
Then on a sudden, through the air, a phantom
Whirred like a partridge, or a Shanghae bantam,
Not from Oak Hall, I 'm sure, for he 'd no *things*
For clothing, save a cap and shoes with wings :
“ I 'm Mercury,” says he, “ Sir, from the sky,
Won't you step up? Suppose we take a fly,
You 're used to journeys in all sorts of weathers,
So don't refuse the trip for lack of feathers ;
The change of air will make you strong and hearty,
So no excuse, but come and join our party.”
Well ! hand in hand, we started through the air —
Whither I knew not, nor could say from where, —

Until we saw, far-gleaming through the night,
A glorious mountain of empyrean height,
Around whose unseen base the restless floods
Kissed slumberously the gently whispering woods,
While on its summit, the near planets' beams
Poured sunlike down, in iris-coloured streams,
So softly luminous I felt a pity
For mortals doomed to gas and spermaceti.
And for a friendly chat, had gathered here
The classic deities from far and near.
I started back, you may suppose, abashed ;
No yellow kids — and boots and breeches splashed ;
But Mercury, who clapped me on the shoulder,
Bid me take heart and be a little bolder :
“ Don't mind your dress,” he cried, “ that makes no odds,
Such things are trifles, Sir, among the gods ;
Dress makes the *man*, but in our higher state, your
Optics can look through fashions to the nature ;
And pluck false plumes — whoever wear the dress,
Magpie or man — in town or wilderness.
And as for talk and talent — why, we live
Freer than men — where we can't gain we give :
But if you 're modest where you don't or *do* know,
I'll mention you, aside, to Mrs. Juno :
You'd better keep your corner and be dumb,
And I will serve you for a medium.
That's all the fashion now among mankind,
Where wooden legs have muscles and a mind.
Long since the poets sung, a maiden's tone,
When she's distressed, could move a heart of stone ;
But now young ladies merely fix their eyes
On tables — and mahogany replies.”

Well! snug and cosey as a village rector,
I took an arm-chair and a glass of nectar,
While by some pungent rappings on the head
My breechless friend informed me what was said.
They spoke in Greek — not modern — and deplored
Their shrines and temples, now no more adored.
“Really,” cried Juno, “’t is too great a shame!
They’ve left us down below, with scarce a name:
Why, not to speak of priests, there’s not a poet
Howe’er he love us, who would dare to show it.
Poor Cupid, who was once so gay and funny,
Must talk of plate, establishments, and money;
On Bacchus’ shrines each day the dust grows thicker;
He’ll die, nor even be preserved in liquor.
I’m sorry, Bacchus boy, to give you pain,
But you know ’t is so — certainly in Maine,
For measures have been changed by Uncle Sam,
And thirty scruples go with every dram.
Our faithless cavalier, old Mr. Rumour,
Has thrown *himself* away on Mrs. Bloomer,
And it would seem there’s not a frail or lost ’un
But what can be re-sanctified in Boston:
The officious host shall lay his scruples down
To show her the young Fabii of the town;
‘Kiss her, young gentlemen, she shall not hurt you,
And you, perhaps, may bring her back to virtue.’
Thus is she counted in with Learning’s class,
Wondering, no doubt, how it all came to pass;
And whether what she knows is just the knowledge
That’s fit to fit ingenuous youth for college.
Well! for my part, such doings shock me quite,
We’re called upon, I think, to set them right;

And since mankind forget us in the sky,
Suppose we venture down to Earth, and try.
E'en Themis here would say it was no crime
To trim — the merest bit — to suit the time.
So I would say, go down, — and give my vote
For lace and satin, hood and petticoat ;
If we can't quite reform these human elves,
We'll do them some slight good — despite themselves :
I, for my part, shall do the best I can,
And seem a woman, christened Marianne.
Minerva shall her patronymic vary
And foot it down below as Mistress Mary ;
Venus with loveliness shall crown the whole,
Fair to the vision, genial to the soul ;
Kindness and truth shall in her empire blend,
Loved as a wife, a mother, and a friend ;
While round her play — like silver-sounding waters —
The voices of the Graces — her fair daughters ;
And if mankind would read her riddle nearer,
The Latin word for clear shall make it clearer.
Ceres shall claim, in gracefulness of mein,
Her kindred with the lovely Paphian queen ;
Nor yet, the less for dignity, be merry
Although instead of nectar, she take perry.
Diana, caring naught for mortal man,
Shall dwell, like moonlight, in the gentle Anne ;
Pomona, free and generous to all,
Shall fill with kindness Eliza's hall,
Nor as a woman either be less charming
For horticulture and a little farming.
Psyche, whose orbs in gentle lustre roll
Beaming around intelligence and soul,

Shall fold her pinions — veil her heavenly birth,
And bless — as Mary T. — a home on Earth.
And Flora, tired of eastern snow and ice,
Shall come and build a bower near Paradise.
Not the least loved among our band shall *she* be
Who gives our feasts their zest — the matchless Hebe ;
Her spirit-quickenings gifts shall be the same —
A rose is no less sweet from change of name, —
And many a mortal, too, shall guess the truth
And hail, in her, the Deity of Youth.
The heavenly spark, the bold Prometheus stole,
Shall warm and brighten still in living coal ;
The Muses shall their varied gifts reveal,
And kindred bells give a harmonious peal ;
And Themis skilled to judge both deed and manner
Speak from the placid lips of Georgiana.
Egeria — wise, although not born a German —
Shall give, perhaps, some hints towards a sermon ;
And, once a week, we 'll meet by candle-light,
And if we can't convert, we 'll show what 's right.

What followed I can't tell or guess at, even,
For I awoke — the clock was striking seven.
I went — 't was Tuesday — to a friend's, to tea ;
And there, there seemed some odd analogy ;
But in this world here, there 's so much that 's seeming,
That one may doubt *when* one 's awake — *when* dreaming.
Still it is true, *I think*, we 're at this board ;
True, as I fear, that the last cup is poured ;
True, that when here we greet our friends no more,
Our thoughts shall follow to a foreign shore.
Track them to where the Day-beam's burning lids

Pour their full glory on the Pyramids ;
Saunter with them through Tempe's classic vale,
Or spread on Como's lake the drooping sail,
Pluck the bright clusters of Italia's vines,
Or watch the midnight sun, through Norway's pines ;
And when, once more, their footsteps homeward turn,
And Friendship's fires upon home's altars burn,
We 'll say we 've made our social jewels up,
And drink their welfare in another cup.

PROLOGUE TO JAMAICA-PLAIN PLAYS.

REPEATED AT CHICKERING'S HALL.



KIND friends ! Before the Prompter's bell is heard,
I crave your leave to speak one little word.
Not to fatigue you or your patience strain
With stilted mouthings in the 'Ercles vein :
No — when the Ass had donned the Lion's skin,
He scattered terror among kith and kin ;
Great fear, too, fell on all men far and wide,
Even strong-minded women sought to hide ;
You could n't tell the wise man from the fool ;
The truant urchins wished themselves at school.
But when this Donkey tried the Lion's thunder,
Derision took the place of fear and wonder ;
His own constituents put him down by vote,
The punsters said he was n't worth an oat ;
And he men thought a marvel just before
Became that very common thing — a Bore ;
While by his fellow Donkeys cuffed and shaken,
Though called a Bore he could n't save his bacon.
So I — by Æsop's teachings rendered wise —
Will strive to startle neither ears nor eyes.
For one to *play* the Lion were a pity,
Since real ones are so common in our city.

Sometimes a prince — sometimes a foreign actor,
Sometimes our own domestic manufacture ;
And when the grand Numidian monsters fail,
We've "Mrs. Thumb," or "Venus and the Whale."
Indeed, while showmen puff and news-boys cry on,
You'd say each separate paper had a lie-on.
But while I talk so much of singing small,
You'll say, perhaps, "Why should he speak at all?"
'T is but to ask for favour in your sight, —
A friendly judgment of our plays to-night.
To ask one's neighbours to the humblest spread
And not shake hands, would scarce be deemed well-bred ;
While courteous welcome at the feast to share
Will lend a relish to the simplest fare,
And he who gives, ungrudgingly, his best,
May dare to cater for a princely guest.
So I — in greeting — on our threshold stand,
To offer, in our actors' name, my hand ;
To bid you all a welcome to our house,
Our modest banquet of the country mouse ;
For though, to please you, we have taken down
Our rustic scenes, and set them up in town,
And left, to-night, Jamaica Plain and steeple,
We're still, ourselves, the very same Plain people.
'T is true that round these walls the memory lingers
Of Urso's bow and Dresel's fluent fingers ;
And recollection still the heart bewitches
With thoughts of last year's histrionic riches.
But we can't claim the homage which you bring
When artists play and prima-donnas sing ;
The great high-priests of the Dramatic Art
Would count us in with Thespis and his cart.

Upon our borrowed stage, to-night you 'll see
No gorgeous train of sceptred Tragedy —
No buskined heroes — no terrific fights
'Twixt rival monarchs clad in kilts and tights ;
No Hamlet — filled with filial awe and wonder —
Urging the royal Dane to “stand from under ;”.
Indeed, should our ambition wildly soar
To tread the haunted halls of Elsinore,
Not only would necessity require
Hamlet to be “omitted by desire,”
But on that platform on the Danish coast
I really think we should “give up the Ghost.”
But though no being in the hues of youth
Will here dispute the *palm* with Edwin Booth ;
Although upon our tiny stage are seen
No Clarke — no Warren — and no Laura Keene,
Although we 're modest, be it understood
We think the few we have are pretty good ;
Not fit, perhaps, for dramas such as are
Of the grand genus termed “spectacular,”
Where magic cauldrons beneath spectral moons
Are filled by “supes ” that nature meant for spoons ;
But then those great dramatic Megatheriums
Will often, for the audience, rhyme with “weary 'ems.”
Men like what 's human, and prefer the art
Which makes us smile, or bids a tear to start.
Our drama will but strive your praise to win
By Feeling's touch, which makes the whole world kin ;
And should both piece and actors be at fault,
Your wit must season both with Attic salt.
Let us, at least, amuse you while you 're waiting,
Hopeless, almost, for winter ice and skating,

For though the lake be froze, from side to side,
You would n't like to let the Country slide.
So while your presence aids that Country's cause,
Let your kind hearts vouchsafe *us* some applause :
Whatever word, as critics, you might say,
Do n't take, to-night, our *characters* away ;
And since we 've put our heads at your commands,
'T is but a fair return to ask — your hands.

PROLOGUE AT RYE BEACH.



Author discovered writing—turned from the Audience.

Good Prompter ! can't you make the audience wait ?

"We can't indeed, the clock is striking eight."

I'm working over an impromptu jest.

"'T is getting serious." Then I'll do my best ;

Why, here they are — I'm sure I beg your pardon,

But then the task I've taken *is* a hard 'un.

Our actors send me forward to excuse

The faults and failings of our rustic Muse,

To beg the critical will not deride,

Or call her slipshod — shabby — countrified ;

'T is true some purblind poet used to boast

"Beauty when unadorned 's adorned the most ;"

But then he never knew the power of fashion —

We like her better with a frock and sash on.

Why, now-a-days, your merest country girls

Must have their laces, furbelows, and curls,

Nor show themselves before their nearest kin

Without *several* yards of crinoline.

If private life be thus in this our age,

How much the more is needed for the stage ;
For like all others, the Dramatic Art
Has grown apace since Thespis and his cart.
'T is true, we 've all the Muses with us here,
But what 's a Muse without her proper sphere ?
Father Apollo — like a cross, old hunks —
Sent them all down to Rye without their trunks.
And so Melpomene 's ashore — that 's plain ;
What 's gorgeous Tragedy, without a train ?
Therefore, as velvets can't be had for asking,
Thalia thought *she 'd* do a little masking.
As far as wardrobes go, we 'll do our best,
Imagination must supply the rest ;
For though sufficient for the wants of Rye,
The Stage has needs e'en Chesley can't supply.
And so, a drawing-room, we hope you 're able
To see in some few chairs and one poor table,
And where our *Dramatis Personæ* meet
Paint for yourselves a study and a street.
As city people make their cream of milk,
You 'll please to take our calico for silk.
We 've done our best with all our wit and will
To dress ourselves according to the bill ;
But it 's no joke, with all one's work and stitches,
To get an old man up with wig and breeches,
And without clothes denominated "small,"
A Count, you know, is *no account* at all,
And then we 've had such trouble with our actors —
At first they fled from us like malefactors :
Indeed, like Mercury, with wingèd shoes :
You could n't even catch them by their "cues."

But then, 't is hard upon a holiday
To catch a tired man and make him play ;
Or when your friends are out upon a bender
To stay at home and study up for "Slender ;"
And when they take their boat with laughs and halloos
Resign the "Shoals," and stick among the "Shallows."
No wonder there 's reluctance universal
To give up out-door fun for dull rehearsal ;
But many thanks — they heard the Prompter's call
And stood, like Bricks — as steadfast as a wall.
And then our women ! — why, they too are Bricks,
And helped us through full many an awkward fix.
Would I could paint those histrionic elves —
"No matter — let the Public judge themselves."
Well then, you shall — and so I 'll only say
You 'll ask to see them many a coming day ;
And that — *"Why, Sir, you 've surely said enough."*
Prompter ! your heart 's not penetrable stuff.
"Young Syntax says he knows the Public cools."
Tell Syntax to confine himself to rules.
*"Tom Tape has knocked and asked five times before,
How long he must stay waiting at the door."*
Beseech young Thomas not to take it hard
If he 's kept waiting longer in the yard.
Let him arrange for our next Monday's pleasures,
A yard 's the place for Tape to take to measures.
Don't laugh — I 'm sure you 'll find out pretty quick
Our yard of Tape or Tape of yard 's no stick.
But there are things still waiting to be said —
"Why, Sir, they 'll call you next 'The Great Boar's Head.'"
Prompter, be still, and prophesy no more —

My worthy friend and augur, *you're* a bore.
But bless me ! I 'd no thought it was so late ;
The play-bills said we should begin at eight :
So I must leave my Prologue half unspoke,
Nor stop to try to catch that vagrant joke.
But then you 'll not be cheated of your laughter,
We 've some good things, we hope, to follow after ;
So I retire, and leave our actors' cause
In your kind hands, I trust, for just applause.

FLAG-RAISING AT RYE.



BUT one short twelvemonth since, the God of Day,
His chariot sprinkled with the Atlantic spray,
Urging his flame-shod steeds, that ask no rest,
On, through the evening portals of the West
To bear the gladness of his morning smiles
To Europe's seaports — India's fragrant isles,
Through the whole track his tireless axles run,
Counting the realms and nations — one by one,
Within the orbit of the circling Hours
Found no more prosperous — happier land than ours.
Full-bosomed Peace stood with white, beckoning hand
To bid the exile welcome to our strand,
And we who listened, pitying, to his moan,
Ne'er dreamed *his* woes could ever be our own.
But when the guns from Sumter's battery spoke,
With what a bound our startled hearts awoke!
How our souls loved that loyal one and true
Above whose little band our standard flew!
How Northern bosoms shared the soldier's pang

When the last bugle from the ramparts rang ;
When gathered at the shattered flag-staff's foot
He and his comrades heard the last salute,
Then with reluctant footsteps — sad and slow —
Yielded his fortress to the traitor foe,
And looking backward through the smoky air,
Wept for those crumbling casemates, grim and bare.

I need not sing the changes that have been
Even since these fields put on their earliest green :
How we, at first, ne'er thought that local " jaw "
Could end in breaking down a nation's law ;
Then how we called Bellona from the shades,
And how she came with epaulettes and Aids ;
How sundry functionaries lost their wits,
And sundry more had epaulettic fits.
You know when Cadmus sowed the Dragon's teeth,
A crop of warriors started from the heath,
Each sour-faced varlet pitching into t'other,
His no less acid and pugnacious brother ;
Which only means, I think, to speak the truth,
That fellow — Cadmus — had n't a sweet tooth.
Well ! from the seed thus scattered to th' Infernals
Sprang up with us whole bushels full of Colonels ;
And where to richer soil the grain was ploughed in,
Full many a gallant name we all are proud in.
But to recount the heroes of the Nation
Were here a work of supererogation,
My present task is, in poetic speech,
To tell our doings here about Rye Beach.
Fair Rye ! The cosiest hamlet of the plain,

Few see thee once but long to come again.
Whether they sit round Disco's plenteous board,
And in the corn-loft, there, at night are stored ;
Or at his brother's mansion take their supper,
Like the Excelsior Youth "a few feet upper,"
Who never leaves the hungry in the lurch,
Gentle or simple — laity or church ;
Where Friendship, Taste, and Wit keep company,
And where our Bishop seeks a second "See :"
And laying by, awhile, the bands and gown,
Forgets the dust and tumult of the town.
Upon our list of colonists appears
That muscular young regiment at Spears,
Good with the oar and gun, and good as dancers,
For men of Spears must surely know the Lancers.
But though I'd paint our hamlet and our clan,
'T would never do to praise each separate man :
Before both time and your kind patience fail,
Let me bethink myself and shorten sail.
And beg your pardon for each feeble pun —
I really do — 't was only said in fun ;
And as I said before, perhaps 't is best
To give our soberest thoughts a chance to jest ;
In the long run, you'll find, I think, in choosing,
A musing Muse can never be a-musing :
So here I'll stop, and only ask you whether
More pleasant people ever came together —
And did you ever know a place more fit
For quiet pleasure or for mirth and wit ?
But there's no time for questionings, to day,
I know you did n't, so I'll only say,

I wonder — when the Flood abated — why
Noah did n't steer the Ark direct for Rye?

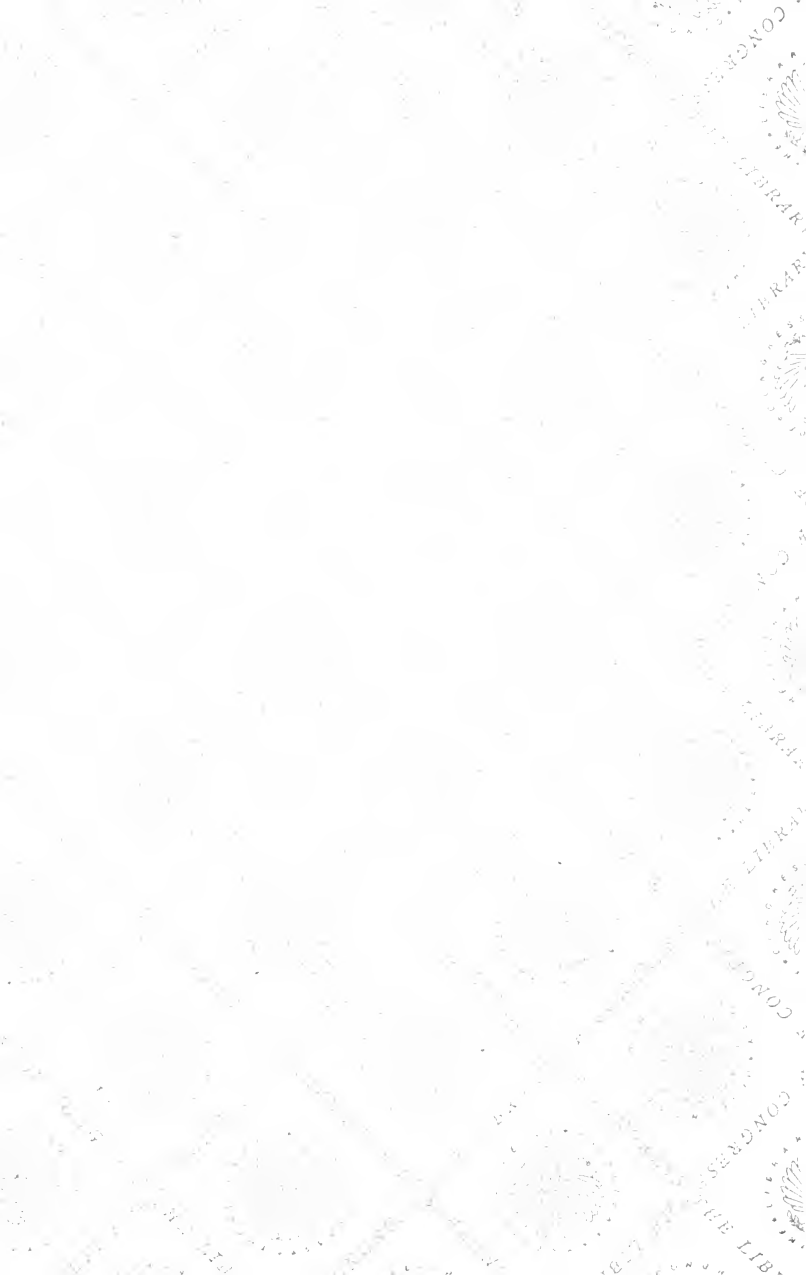
No time for *idle* questionings — but not
Alas ! for that which fits the time and spot.
Why floateth here among our rustling trees
Our country's banner in the ocean breeze ?
What needs — with such a canopy on high —
A blue to rival the o'er-arching sky ?
Can there be stars, than ours more bright and fair ?
And when the Day-God pales those cressets there,
Have we not lilies — Flora's loveliest daughters,
Like frosted moonlight stars upon our waters ?
And art's most roseate bars were dull and cold
To evening's stripes of crimson and of gold.
Were it not wiser to forget awhile
All cares, and only bask in Nature's smile ?
Not so ! 'T is true, the storm-beat sea-birds seek
Refuge and safety in some inland creek ;
The anchored ships avoid the tempest's shock
Beneath the lee of some gigantic rock —
But yet forget not in that shelter there,
Their homesteads are the ocean and the air.
So we — remote, to-day, from War's alarms,
Cradled to peacefulness in Nature's arms,
Cannot forget the country for whose life
Our dear ones, now, have joined the distant strife.
When Sumter's flag-staff fell by treachery's darts,
Its fibres struck their roots in Northern hearts :
We know that banner — floating there above —
Doth symbolize whate'er on earth we love ;

That underneath its broad, protecting fold
Ourselves were born — our parents have grown old ;
And as the Lover — when he leaves his fair,
Wears next his heart a ringlet of her hair,
Whose magic, in the darkest, loneliest hour,
Fills his sad soul with steadfastness and power,
Our hearts that emblem's blazoned bars enfold
Dearer than keepsake lock of jet or gold ;
Plant it above our roof, with filial hand,
And murmur, "God preserve our native Land."

SONNET.



*As one who tracks the heavy-laden wain
Which beareth home its nodding, ripened sheaves,
To glean what chance-strown ears the reaper leaves
Of his rich store of gathered golden grain;
So I, upon Thought's harvested domain,
Where her bright web Imagination weaves,
Sitting beneath the sunny cottage-eaves,
Have gleaned these scattered fancies of the brain,
With the fond hope that their fast-fading flowers
Might in chill Winter's quickly coming night
Bring to my soul the thoughts of Summer hours
And Autumn's colourings, so gorgeous-bright,
And that by some dear hearts, perchance, there be
Found there for coming Spring some seeds of memory.*



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